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The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm

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THE CULT OF IMAGES  
IN THE AGE BEFORE ICONOCLASM

ERNST KITZINGER

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## INTRODUCTION

IN the entire history of European art it is difficult to name any one fact more momentous than the admission of the graven image by the Christian Church. Had Christianity persisted in the categorical rejection of images, and, indeed, of all art, which it proclaimed during the first two centuries of its existence, the main stream of the Graeco-Roman tradition would have been blocked, driven underground, or, at best, diverted into side channels of purely secular or decorative work. To speculate in any detail about so hypothetical a course of events is futile. On the other hand, the stages and means whereby the original resistance was overcome are a legitimate and important subject of historical inquiry. The process is often thought to have been completed for all practical purposes during the third century or, at the latest, with the victory of Christianity under Constantine the Great. By that time the Church appears to have entered fully into the heritage of classical artistic media and iconographic and stylistic formulae and the problem of the admissibility of images in the Church seems to have been settled, at least on principle, not to be re-opened until centuries later in the period of Iconoclasm in Byzantium.

In recent years this concept of the course of events has begun to undergo a marked change. Historians and church historians have uncovered an increasing number of instances of Christian opposition to images in the period preceding the outbreak of official Iconoclasm in Byzantium under Leo III in the eighth century, and scholars are more and more inclined to seek the roots of that movement within rather than without the Church.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Byzantine Iconoclasm tends to be linked more closely to the uniconic phase of early Christianity.<sup>2</sup> An undercurrent of at least potential iconoclasm does in fact run through the entire history of the Church in the intervening centuries. Instead of assuming a simple alternation of anti-iconic and pro-iconic periods, it is necessary to think more in terms of a continuing conflict, which finally erupted in an explosion of well-nigh world-historical import.

The "fever curve" of this conflict, as it developed through the centuries, can be discerned more clearly if a distinction is made between three ele-

<sup>1</sup> S. Der Nersessian, "Une apologie des images du septième siècle," *Byzantion*, XVII (1944-45) 58 ff. N. H. Baynes, "The Icons before Iconoclasm," *The Harvard Theological Review*, XLIV (1951) 93 ff.

<sup>2</sup> G. Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius and the Iconoclastic Controversy," *Church History*, XIX (1950) 77 ff. These links are also stressed in the introductory chapter of Prof. P. J. Alexander's still unpublished monograph on the Patriarch Nicephoros, which the author kindly let me read in manuscript.

ments that chiefly contributed towards it: practice, opposition, and apologetic theory. Throughout the centuries of the growth of Christian art it was practice which played the leading role. The setting up of images, and increasingly also the acts of devotion or propitiation of which they became the instruments or the objects, inevitably gave rise to opposition and this, in turn, called forth defensive statements of a theoretical kind. This is not to say that opposition and theory did not help on their part to promote practice. Undoubtedly there were occasions when the partisans of images were spurred by opposition to intensify their devotion. There were also times when theoretical considerations helped to promote the creation and veneration of images, and to remove scruples obstructing such practices.<sup>3</sup> Explicit statements on the nature and function of images were, however, mostly *ex post facto* rationalizations of developments which had already taken place.<sup>4</sup> Usually such statements owe their existence to the pressure of opposition and quite often they fall short of the realities of their time.

There are two periods during which the leading role of practice is particularly in evidence: In the third and fourth centuries and again in the generations between the reign of Justinian I and the outbreak of Iconoclasm. It is a striking fact that when painting and sculpture first began to infiltrate Christian assembly rooms and cemeteries they did so practically unheeded by either opponents or apologists of Christianity – engaged though these were in passionate disputes over idols and idolatry. No literary statement from the period prior to the year 300 would make one suspect the existence of any Christian images other than the most laconic and hieroglyphic of symbols.<sup>5</sup> When, in the early fourth century, Christian art did become a subject of more articulate comment, such comment at first was hostile, or, at any rate, restrictive.<sup>6</sup> It was not before the second half of the fourth century that any writer began to speak of Christian pictorial art in positive terms. Even then it was a matter of fleeting references rather than systematic de-

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 120 f.

<sup>4</sup> An important exception is the Eighty-Second Canon of the Council of A.D. 692, in which the theologian takes the offensive in explicit terms. For this see below, pp. 121, 142.

<sup>5</sup> The only references to Christian religious representations in the literature of this period are some critical remarks by Tertullian on images of the Good Shepherd on chalices (H. Koch, *Die altchristliche Bilderfrage nach den literarischen Quellen* [Goettingen, 1917] 9 f. and W. Elliger, *Die Stellung der alten Christen zu den Bildern in den ersten vier Jahrhunderten* [Leipzig, 1930] 28 f.) and Clement of Alexandria's list of symbolic subjects suitable for representation on seals. The latter passage is somewhat in contrast to Clement's hostile attitude towards religious imagery in general (cf. Koch, *op. cit.*, 14 ff.; Elliger, *op. cit.*, 38 ff.) and thus illustrates the dichotomy which began to manifest itself in the early third century between theory and practice.

<sup>6</sup> Council of Elvira (Koch, *op. cit.*, 31 ff.; Elliger, *op. cit.*, 34 ff.). Eusebius' letter to the Empress Constantia (Koch, *op. cit.*, 42 ff.; Elliger, *op. cit.*, 47 ff.; see also below, n. 28).

fense.<sup>7</sup> Defense lagged behind attack, as attack had lagged behind practice. Such justifications of Christian images as were attempted during the second half of the fourth century were based exclusively on the usefulness of pictures as educational tools, particularly for the illiterate. There are reasons to believe, however, that by the time these statements were formulated the actual use of images was no longer confined to the purely didactic. For only a short time later the first voices of protest were raised against Christians indulging in image worship.<sup>8</sup>

Practice once more took a decisive lead during the period that followed the reign of the great Justinian. At that time the Christian image began to assume a role more central, a function more vital in everyday life in the Greek East than it ever had held in previous centuries. But again reaction was delayed. Though hostile voices and defensive statements were not lacking at the time, an opposition commensurate to this great expansion of devotional, and indeed idolatric, practices did not crystallize until the second quarter of the eighth century. It is the Iconoclastic movement itself which constitutes the full reaction to the development of the post-Justinianic era. Indeed, the violence of that movement becomes understandable only in the light of the spectacular intensification of the cult of images during the five preceding generations. The Iconoclasts' onslaught, in turn, led to the elaboration of a theoretical defense of Christian images, far more systematic and profound than any that had been attempted previously. Thus, for a broad over-all view, the period from the sixth to the ninth century offers a pattern similar to that encountered in the third and fourth, i.e. a regular sequence of practice, opposition and defense.

It is with the expansion of the cult of images in the period between Justinian and Iconoclasm that the present study is concerned. The critical role of this period, and particularly of the sixth century, in the development of idolatric beliefs and practices among Christians was recognized long ago.<sup>9</sup> The pages which follow are intended to bring this development into sharper focus and to draw attention to its outstanding importance. It will be their principal purpose to bring together as much as possible of the textual evidence which testifies to an intensification of cult practices at that time and to explore the forces which motivated this development. Naturally, in order to throw into relief those phenomena which were new at that time, the evi-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the Cappadocian Fathers as quoted by Koch, *op. cit.*, 69 ff. and Elliger, *op. cit.*, 60 ff.

<sup>8</sup> See below, pp. 92 f.

<sup>9</sup> K. Schwarzlose, *Der Bilderstreit* (Gotha, 1890) 19; E. von Dobschuetz, *Christusbilder* (= *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, Neue Folge, III) (Leipzig, 1899) *passim*, especially p. 35; and, recently, A. Grabar, *Martyrium*, II (Paris, 1946) 343 ff.

dence concerning the cult of images in the preceding centuries must be taken into account. But the focus will be on the period between Justinian and Iconoclasm.

The study is the work of an art historian who has become convinced that an understanding of the changing attitudes which Christians took towards religious imagery in the course of the centuries is essential for an understanding of Christian art. Increasingly positive attitudes on the one hand, restraining or outright hostile forces on the other, are bound to have left their imprints on the monuments. The post-Justinianic era offers singularly rich opportunities for such an approach. The literary record concerning images is quite extensive, as we shall see; the changes it reveals in their function, uses and meanings are very striking; and there are many developments in the history of the pictorial arts of that period to which these changes appear to be directly relevant. The reader should bear in mind that the study, limited though it is to literary sources, was undertaken with an eye on the monuments of the same period. It is a preparatory step on which, it is hoped, a new appraisal of an important phase of early Byzantine art may eventually be based.

The literary controversies of the Iconoclastic period are outside the scope of this study. Opposition and defense were not, however, altogether silent even during the preceding century and a half of expanding cult practices. These voices confirm the magnitude of the change which then took place in the Christian attitude towards images. They form an essential part of the literary record of that era, and will be reviewed in the last two chapters. The apologists' attempts to provide the new roles and functions of religious imagery with a theoretical foundation are particularly relevant. Such statements make it possible to interpret the monuments of the period in the light of contemporary thought as well as practice.<sup>10</sup>

# I. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN CULT OF IMAGES

Christianity's original aversion to the visual arts was rooted in its spirituality. "But the hour cometh and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). The concept of spiritu-

<sup>10</sup> I wish to acknowledge the help I have received in this work from my colleagues at Dumbarton Oaks, particularly from Prof. A. M. Friend, Jr., Prof. S. Der Nersessian, and Mr. C. A. Mango, who have read the paper in manuscript and have contributed a number of valuable suggestions and additions. Prof. Friend has also offered certain fundamental criticisms, which have prompted me to make some major changes in the text and have helped me to clarify my own views. While gratefully recognizing the benefits derived from constructive criticism, I cannot disclaim responsibility for any controversial matter the paper may contain. The manuscript was completed in August 1953.



alized worship found what is perhaps its most eloquent expression in the words of Minucius Felix, written at a time when the ideal was already endangered from several directions: "Do you suppose we conceal our object of worship because we have no shrines and altars? What image can I make of God when, rightly considered, man himself is an image of God? What temple can I build for him, when the whole universe, fashioned by His handiwork cannot contain him? Shall I, a man, housed more spaciously, confine within a tiny shrine power and majesty so great? Is not the mind a better place of dedication? our inmost heart of consecration? Shall I offer to God victims and sacrifices which He has furnished for my use, and so reject His bounties? That were ingratitude, seeing that the acceptable sacrifice is a good spirit and a pure mind and a conscience without guile. He who follows after innocence makes prayer to God; He who practices justice offers libations; He who abstains from fraud, propitiates; He who rescues another from peril, slays the best victim. These are our sacrifices, these our hallowed rites; with us justice is the true measure of religion."<sup>11</sup>

As this passage shows, the radical rejection of the visual arts by the primitive Church was part and parcel of a general rejection of material props in religious life and worship. The resistance to figure representations was, however, particularly strong, partly because of the prohibition of graven images which formed part of the Mosaic Law, and partly because of the very central role which statuary, and images generally, occupied in the religions of Graeco-Roman paganism. Naturally, the resistance on both these counts was concerned primarily with those forms of representation which came under the heading of idols or lent themselves to idolatric abuse. There were many modes of representation to which no real objection could be taken on this score. Decorative and symbolic devices, narrative and didactic images — all these were relatively harmless, and it was in these guises that art did, in fact, enter Christian assembly rooms and cemeteries in the third century. Much of the art of the Roman catacombs betrays a studied attempt to avoid any suspicion or encouragement of idolatric practices. Nevertheless this first and seemingly harmless step proved decisive.

The way for image worship was paved in the fourth century by the increasingly widespread adoption of other material props which were not barred by any specific prohibitions, notably crosses and relics. Worship of the cross may have been practiced here and there even during the period of persecutions, but received its major impetus through the symbolic identification of the instrument of Christ's Passion with the victorious standard of

<sup>11</sup> Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 32, 1–3 (Loeb ed. [London, 1931] 412 f.).



the army of Constantine the Great, an identification graphically expressed in the sign of the labarum, which appears on coins in the third decade of the fourth century.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the fourth century *proskynesis* before the Sign of the Passion was considered a perfectly natural thing for a Christian.<sup>13</sup> The cult of relics must have spread even more widely and rapidly. Particles of the True Cross, allegedly re-discovered in the reign of Constantine, were soon eagerly sought by the faithful all over the world, according to Cyril of Jerusalem (*ca* A.D. 350).<sup>14</sup> Julian the Apostate, while apparently not yet able to hurl the accusation of idolatry back at the Christians, inveighed against their cult of tombs and their prostration before the wood of the cross.<sup>15</sup> During the same period Gregory of Nyssa wrote an ecstatic passage – to be quoted later in this study – in which he extolled the cult of the relics of the martyrs.<sup>16</sup>

The cult of the cross and of relics, then, was in full swing in the time of the great Cappadocian Fathers. Image worship, however, does not come into their purview even in a negative way. At least the worship of *religious* images does not. It is well to remember when considering the rise of idolatric practices among Christians that the Fathers of the fourth century did admit the propriety of the honors and respects traditionally paid to the image of the emperor. According to Malalas, Constantine instituted the practice of having his own image carried in solemn procession on the anniversary day of the founding of his Capital City and of having the emperor of the day bow before it. Whether this is true or not, we should certainly believe the sixth

<sup>12</sup> J. Maurice, *Numismatique Constantinienne*, II (Paris, 1911) 506 ff. and pl. XV, 7. The story in the *Vita Constantini*, which explains the origin of that famous standard through a vision experienced by Constantine prior to the battle on the Milvian Bridge, has been the subject of a great deal of controversy in recent years. Some scholars consider it a later fabrication (cf. especially H. Grégoire, "La Vision de Constantin liquidée," in *Byzantion*, XIV [1939] 341 ff.; also *Id.*, *ibid.*, XIII [1938] 568, 578 f.; and, more recently, G. Downey in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VI [1951] 64). Others uphold it as basically authentic, though according to Prof. Alföldi it was a monogram of Christ, rather than a cross, which Constantine saw in his vision (A. Alföldi, "Hoc signo victor eris. Beitrage zur Geschichte der Bekehrung Konstantins des Grossen," *Pisciculi. Studien zur Religion und Kultur des Altertums Franz Joseph Doelger zum 60. Geburtstage dargeboten* [Muenster i.W., 1939] 1 ff., especially 6 ff.; *Id.*, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* [Oxford, 1948] 16 ff.; cf. also J. Vogt, "Berichte ueber Kreuzeserscheinungen aus dem 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr.," *Université Libre de Bruxelles. Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire orientales et slaves*, IX [1949] 593 ff.).

<sup>13</sup> St. Asterius Amasenus, *Homilia XI in laudem S. Stephani* (Migne, PG 40, col. 337 BC; Koch, *op. cit.*, 67).

<sup>14</sup> *Catechesis* IV, 10 and X, 19; *Epistola ad Constantium Imperatorem*, c. 3 (PG 33, cols. 469A, 685B–688A, 1168B).

<sup>15</sup> C. I. Neumann, *Iuliani Imperatoris librorum contra Christianos quae supersunt* (Leipzig, 1880) 196, 225 f. *Id.*, *Kaiser Julians Buecher gegen die Christen* (Leipzig, 1880) 25, 43 f.

<sup>16</sup> See below, p. 116.

century chronicler when he says that this was the custom in his own day.<sup>17</sup> There is no lack of evidence that the traditional worship of the imperial portrait suffered little if any interruption through the triumph of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> Numerous sources of the fourth century show that once the emperor had become a Christian such practices were no longer objected to by most ecclesiastical authorities. The famous quotation from Saint Basil's Treatise on the Holy Ghost,<sup>19</sup> so often utilized in later centuries in defense of the cult of images of Christ, as well as passages by other writers of this period in which adoration of the imperial image is adduced to illustrate a point,<sup>20</sup> show that this form of worship was, in fact, considered customary and proper.<sup>21</sup> Gregory of Nazianz, in his first diatribe against Julian, states the Christian attitude in regard to what he calls "the customary honors of the sovereign" more explicitly: ". . . they must needs have adoration through which they may appear more awful – and not merely that adoration which they receive in person, but also that received in their statues and pictures, in order that the veneration may be more insatiable and more complete."<sup>22</sup>

How much headway the cult of the ruler portrait had over the cult of religious images is well illustrated by a confrontation of two passages in the Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgius, written during the first half of the fifth century. If we may trust the testimony of Photius, admittedly a hostile excerptor of the lost text, the cult of the statue of Constantine on the Forum

<sup>17</sup> Joannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, XIII (Bonn ed., p. 322). A paragraph in the *Patria Constantinopoleos* (II, 42) seems to refer to the same rite, though it differs in some details. According to this text the solemnities included a crowning of the statue (*Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, ed. Th. Preger, fasc. 2 [Leipzig, 1907] 172 f.). I owe this reference to Mr. C. A. Mango.

<sup>18</sup> A. Alföldi, in *Roemische Mitteilungen*, XLIX (1934) 77 f. H. Kruse, *Studien zur offiziellen Geltung des Kaiserbildes im roemischen Reiche* (Paderborn, 1934) 34 ff. K. M. Setton, *Christian Attitude towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century*, New York, 1941, 196 ff. See also below, pp. 122 f.

<sup>19</sup> PG 32, col. 149 C. See below, n. 260.

<sup>20</sup> S. Ambrosius, *Hexameron*, VI, 9 (PL 14, col. 281 D); quotations in John of Damascus, *De imaginibus oratio III*, ascribed to St. John Chrysostom and Severianus of Gabala (PG 94, cols. 1408 C, 1409 A; cf. Kruse, *op. cit.*, p. 35 n. 2, p. 36 n. 1; also below, n. 260). There is even an instance from the period prior to the triumph of Christianity: In his Treatise on the Resurrection, which is directed against Origen, Methodius of Olympos (d. A.D. 311) illustrates his belief in the bodily resurrection of man (the image of God) with a reference to "the images of the kings . . . held in honor by all regardless of the material of which they are made. They must all be honored here on account of the form which is in them" (G. N. Bonwetsch, *Methodius = Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, XXVII [Leipzig, 1917] 379 f.).

<sup>21</sup> For a voice of protest see St. Jerome's Commentary on the Book of Daniel, c. 3 (PL 25, col. 507 C). In 425 Theodosius II tried to curb, through an edict, the excesses of such worship: Cod. Theod. 15,4,1.

<sup>22</sup> *Contra Iulianum* I, 80 (PG 35, col. 605 C). For "the customary honors of the sovereign" see I, 81 (*ibid.* col. 608A).

Constantini was, by the time of Philostorgius, complete with propitiatory sacrifices, burning of candles and incense, prayers and apotropaic supplications.<sup>23</sup> But the same Philostorgius, when speaking of the famous statue of Christ at Paneas, is at pains to show that when, prior to its alleged destruction during the reign of Julian, the statue was transferred from a location near a public fountain to the diaconicon of a church, it was not an object of worship or *proskynesis*, but merely of due respect, expressed in its more honored position and in the joyful approach of those who came to see it.<sup>24</sup> Here Philostorgius evidently describes what he considers the proper behavior of a Christian of his own day vis-à-vis a religious image.

In actual fact, however, practice had by this time gone beyond a mere joyful approach, at least in some instances. It is from St. Augustine that we first hear in unambiguous terms of Christians worshipping images. Among those who had introduced superstitious practices in the Church, he mentions *sepulcrorum et picturarum adoratores*, thus linking the cult of images to the cult of tombs.<sup>25</sup> What had been feared in the early years of the century by some authorities<sup>26</sup> had now become an actuality. As was pointed out long ago by Holl,<sup>27</sup> this course of events provides a logical background for the writings and activities of Epiphanius of Salamis in Cyprus, Augustine's contemporary, who seems to have been the first cleric to take up the matter of Christian religious images as a major issue. The exact scope of Epiphanius' campaign depends on whether certain writings attributed to him by the Iconoclasts of the eighth century are accepted as genuine. Specific references to actual *worship* of images by Christians occur in certain

<sup>23</sup> J. Bidez, *Philostorgius Kirchengeschichte = Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller*, XXI (Leipzig, 1913) p. 28 no. 17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 78. See also below, p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, I, 34 (PL 32, col. 1342). Euodius, Bishop of Uzala (d. A.D. 424), had recorded by an anonymous writer a story of a quasi-miraculous appearance of a *velum* depicting a miracle which had been operated the previous day by the relics of St. Stephen preserved in the city (PL 41, col. 850 f.; Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 35 ff., 115° ff.; see also below, p. 113). This might be considered additional testimony of the practice of image worship in the sphere of St. Augustine. The writer speaks of a crowd inspecting and admiring the picture, but — Dobschuetz to the contrary notwithstanding — he does not describe any act of worship before the image. The phrase . . . *tam divinitus pridie gestum salutis beneficium recolebatur, quam postea in veli imagine advertebatur* indicates worship of the miracle rather than the image. The latter plays the role of a mute sermon arousing *stupor . . . amor, admiratio et gratulatio* and thus has the same didactic and edifying function that images have in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers. Indeed, the chapter ends with a short speech addressed to the citizens of Uzala and introduced as *Dei . . . quaedam allocutio in velo tacite significantis quodammodo et dicentis: etc.*

<sup>26</sup> See above, n. 6.

<sup>27</sup> "Die Schriften des Epiphanius gegen die Bilderverehrung" (= *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1916, no. XXXV), reprinted in K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, II (Tuebingen, 1928) 351 ff., especially 384 f.

passages which some scholars do not accept as authentic.<sup>28</sup> But even the most sceptic do not doubt that Epiphanius was an opponent of Christian religious imagery,<sup>29</sup> and at least one of the reasons for his hostility becomes clear from a passage in one of his undisputed writings: "When images are put up the customs of the pagans do the rest."<sup>30</sup> This surely reflects the experience of his own age.

<sup>28</sup> G. Ostrogorsky, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites* (Breslau, 1929) p. 68, no. III (= Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 356, no. I) and nos. 5 and 6; p. 69, no. 9 (= Holl, p. 358, no. 7); p. 70, no. 19 (= Holl, p. 359, no. 16); p. 71, no. 22 (= Holl, p. 360, no. 19). The problem of the disputed writings of Epiphanius is too intricate and too technical to be dealt with by a non-specialist. Having been vindicated by Holl, the writings, with the exception of the "Testament" (Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, p. 67 f., nos. 1 and 2 = Holl, p. 363, nos. 32 and 33), were rejected by Ostrogorsky (*op. cit.*, 61 ff.), whose arguments were, however, not found convincing by other leading Byzantinists (cf. F. Doelger, in *Goettingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* [1929] 353 ff.; H. Grégoire, *Byzantion* IV [1927–28 – published 1929] 769 ff.; V. Grumel, in *Echos d'Orient*, XXIX [1930] 95 ff. Cf. also, for the letter to John of Jerusalem, P. Maas, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXX [1929–30] 279 ff., especially 286). It would seem that the last word on the subject has not yet been spoken. But it may be pointed out that a vigorous and emphatic campaign against images, which acceptance of all or most of the controversial passages makes it necessary to assume, would be a perfectly logical phenomenon for the late fourth century. Furthermore, the argument which really forms the core of Ostrogorsky's thesis hardly carries conviction. He is troubled by the fact that certain fragments, notably his no. 16 (= Holl no. 13), reckon with, and attempt to refute, a defense of images based on the contention that Christ may be depicted because He became a Man. This line of reasoning, according to Ostrogorsky, is characteristic of the defenders of images of the Iconoclastic period. He argues that if writers of the fourth century really had used the christological argument they surely would have been quoted at the Council of 787. Hence the treatise in which this argument is refuted cannot be by Epiphanius. But the defense of images on the basis of the Incarnation is, after all, an obvious one and was anticipated already in Eusebius' letter to the Empress Constantia, in which he refuses her request for an image of Christ (Migne, *PG* 20, cols. 1545 ff. J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, XIII [1767] col. 313. Cf. above, n. 6). In the light of that letter it certainly cannot be maintained, as is done by Ostrogorsky (*op. cit.*, 79), that image problem and christology were not brought together till the time of John of Salonika (who, incidentally, wrote *ca.* A.D. 600 and not *ca.* 680; see below, p. 142). Indeed, the manner, and sometimes even the wording, of Eusebius' refutation of the christological argument anticipates what we find in the disputed fragments of Epiphanius: cf. especially Ostrogorsky, p. 70, no. 15 (= Holl, p. 359, no. 12) and Migne, *PG* 20, col. 1548 AB. On these grounds, then, there is no difficulty in accepting the fragments. The fact that the orthodox party in 787 did not produce any authority of the fourth century in defense of the christological argument need not disturb us. At that time a really articulate defense of Christian images had not yet been attempted on any grounds other than purely utilitarian ones. As was pointed out above (pp. 86 f.), defense lags behind attack. Epiphanius' disputed fragment, however, need not be a reply to an articulate defense of the image of Christ by recognized authorities. All it maintains is that "some say" (*φασίν τινες*) Christ is represented as a Man because He was born of the Virgin Mary (Ostrogorsky no. 16 = Holl no. 13). This goes hardly beyond Eusebius who deals with the same argument as one likely to be advanced against him by his imperial correspondent.

<sup>29</sup> Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, 75, 95, 110 f.

<sup>30</sup> *στῆσαντες . . . τὰς εἰκόνας τὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἔθη λοιπὸν ποιοῦσι* (*Panarion haer.*, 27, 6, 10 = *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller*, XXV, edited by K. Holl [Leipzig, 1915] 311). For the connection between Epiphanius' opposition to images and his christology see Holl, *op. cit.* (above, n. 27), 378 f., 386 f.; Elliger, *op. cit.*, 57 ff.



It is possible that the turn of the fourth century also witnessed the first symptoms and expressions of a belief in magic powers of Christian images. Such a belief is expressed with startling ingenuousness in Rufinus' very free translation of Eusebius' account of the bronze group in Paneas. Rufinus interprets Eusebius' somewhat ambiguous description of a strange plant of great healing power growing at the feet of the figure of Christ and touching the hem of his garment as referring to a real herb which derived its miraculous power from its contact with the Savior's image.<sup>31</sup> Significant as this passage is as an indication of what at least one author of the period around the year 400 expects his devout readers to accept in the way of magic powers of images, it is, of course, nothing more than a piece of free embroidery of an earlier text, and is not based on actual observation of magic practices or miraculous effects. What Theodoretus tells us forty years later about images of St. Symeon the Stylite being placed as apotropaia at the entrances of workshops in Rome has a far more factual ring and indicates a workaday use of a Saint's portrait in a prophylactic capacity.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, in the first half of the sixth century, we encounter the first hint in literature of *proskynesis* being practiced before images in churches. It appears to have been contained in an inquiry received by Bishop Hypatius of Ephesus from one of his suffragans, Julian of Atramyntion. We know of this inquiry only from Hypatius' reply, a highly important document in the history of Christian theory concerning images which will be discussed later. For the moment we are concerned only with the fact that, judging by this letter, Julian, though worried about the propriety of sculpture in churches, in view of the Old Testament prohibition of graven images, took no exception to paintings and even tolerated their worship in the form of *proskynesis*.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Eusebii ecclesiasticae historiae liber VII*, 18, 2. The edition by E. Schwartz and Th. Mommsen (*Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller*, IX, pt. 2 [Leipzig, 1908]) shows Eusebius' and Rufinus' texts conveniently printed side by side (672 f.). Cf. also Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 201, 252\*, 256\*.

<sup>32</sup> Theodoretus, *Religiosa Historia*, c.26 (PG 82, col. 1473 A); cf. also H. Lietzmann, *Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites = Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 3. Reihe, 2. Band, Heft 3 (Leipzig, 1908) pp. 8, 253. For the date of the text see *ibid.*, 237 f., and, more recently, P. Peeters, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, LXI (1943) 30 ff. For a possible relic of this early cult of St. Symeon in Rome cf. H. Delehay in *Atti del IIo Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana tenuto in Roma nell'Aprile 1900* (Rome, 1902) 101 ff. For Holl's theory that the Stylite Saints had a great deal to do with the rise of image worship see below, p. 117.

<sup>33</sup> F. Diekamp, "Analecta Patristica" = *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 117 (Rome, 1938) 127 ff. Baynes, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), 93 ff. P. J. Alexander, "Hypatius of Ephesus: A Note on Image Worship in the Sixth Century," *The Harvard Theological Review*, XLV (1952) 177 ff. Hypatius quotes, or paraphrases, Julian as saying: "Προσκυνητὰς ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν ἑώμεν

Looking over what we have learnt about actual worship of religious images or magic practices and beliefs involving images prior to the middle of the sixth century, we must admit that the evidence, though incontrovertible from the end of the fourth century on both in the Greek East and the Latin West, is scattered and spotty. How widespread such practices actually were during the fifth and first half of the sixth centuries is impossible to say. In any case, however, there can be no doubt that in the second half of the sixth century the cult of images was vastly increased and intensified, primarily in the East, and that it maintained this new strength throughout the seventh century and, indeed, until the outbreak of Iconoclasm.

## II. THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE CULT IN THE ERA AFTER JUSTINIAN

It cannot be pure coincidence that the mere volume of literary notices concerning images increases enormously at this time. Professor Grabar, who has written eloquently and brilliantly on the rise of the cult of images,<sup>34</sup> has observed that the accounts of pilgrims to the Holy Land, previously silent about religious images, now begin to feature them prominently. Images of various kinds also begin to play a conspicuous role in the writings of historians. But the richest mine of information is in the realm of hagiography and popular fiction, in which images and miracles connected with images are frequently found from this time on. Much of this latter material is difficult to date and all too easily dismissed as legendary and tendentious. A great many of the relevant texts were adduced in defense of images at the Second

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*εἶναι γραφάς, ἐπὶ ξύλου δὲ καὶ λίθου πολλάκις οἱ τὰ τῆς γλυφῆς ἀπαγορεύοντες οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀπλημμελὲς ἔωμεν, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ θύραις*" (Diekamp, *op. cit.*, 127). Prof. Alexander (*op. cit.*, p. 179, n. 16) has clarified the meaning of this sentence by showing that it draws a distinction between painting and sculpture and that Julian is opposed only to the latter, except on doors (on this point see below, p. 131). I would, however, amend slightly Prof. Alexander's version of the first part of the sentence. Instead of saying: "We allow the paintings to be worshiped in the sanctuaries . . .," I would translate: "We let be in the sanctuaries the paintings which are worshiped . . .," or even: "Worshiped as they are, we let be the paintings in the sanctuaries . . . ." Julian envisages three possible attitudes of the clergy towards images: Toleration of worship; admission of existence; destruction. For paintings he adopts the first two (with emphasis on the second), for sculpture he is inclined to advocate the third, and this is the object of his inquiry (see the first paragraph of Hypatius' letter). The main object of his concession is the existence of paintings (*ἔωμεν εἶναι*). The *εἶναι* is not brought out in Prof. Alexander's translation and the *οὐδὲ τοῦτο* in the second part of the sentence is interpreted as referring to *τὰ τῆς γλυφῆς*, which is impossible grammatically. It must refer back to *εἶναι* and means that, so far as sculptures are concerned, Julian will admit "not even" their existence. The claim, then, that Julian's attitude amounts to an official approval of the worship of paintings seems to me exaggerated. One can merely say that Julian is aware that they do in fact receive *proskynesis*, but that he is willing to admit them since in Scripture only sculpture is specifically prohibited. For the import of Hypatius' reply see below, p. 138.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.* (above, n. 9), 343 ff.

Council of Nicaea in A.D. 787. While some of them probably were then of recent invention and designed to meet the challenge of Iconoclasm, a considerable number is also preserved in sources other than the Acts of that Council, and in many instances attribution to writers of the late sixth or seventh century has not been, and need not be, doubted, the less so, since similar tales are also preserved in writings which quite indisputably belong to that period, including the works of chroniclers and pilgrims. It is true, of course, that many of these stories are essentially apologetic. One of the results of the great increase in image worship was a stepping-up of opposition, as we shall see, and this in turn called forth defense. The plots of some stories are actually based on acts of aggression against images. In others the influence of theorists attempting to justify images on theological grounds is quite evident. But some tales undoubtedly are spontaneous expressions of popular beliefs. Even a story written for defensive purposes may be woven around a nucleus of reality, or, granted that its plot may be pure invention, it presumably reflects actual conditions at least in its circumstantial detail. The chief interest these stories have for us at the moment lies precisely in the information they impart, almost incidentally, about every-day practices and beliefs concerning images. These details must have been plausible or else the whole story would have been liable to rejection as idle fantasy and thus its purpose — if purpose there was — would have been defeated. There is all the less reason to reject this information since it merely serves to fill in the picture derived from the writings of pilgrims and historians without materially changing it. Provided they are used judiciously and critically the stories about images which blossomed forth in hagiographic and other legendary literature of the late sixth and seventh centuries can be of great help in making our concept of the great vogue of image worship of that period more lively and three-dimensional.

The information given on the rising cult of images by pilgrims, historians, and writers of legends may be summarized under four headings:

1. Devotional practices.
2. Belief in, and exploitation of, magic properties of images.
3. Official use of images as apotropaia and palladia.
4. Belief in images of miraculous origin.

### *Devotional Practices*

The first Palestine pilgrim who explicitly speaks of worship of images is Antoninus of Piacenza (*ca.* A.D. 570). He prayed (*oravimus*) in the Praetorium of Pilate, where there was a picture of Christ said to have been



painted in His lifetime.<sup>35</sup> A clearer statement is made by the same pilgrim in connection with a miraculous image of Christ preserved at Memphis: *pallium lineum in quo est effigies salvatoris . . . que imago singulis temporibus adoratur, et nos eam adoravimus*.<sup>36</sup> In the following century Arculf (ca. 670) reports veneration of a tapestry with figures of Christ and the twelve apostles which he saw in Jerusalem and which allegedly was woven by the Virgin Mary.<sup>37</sup>

These direct testimonies by persons who themselves performed or witnessed acts of worship do not specify the forms of the ritual. The miracle stories are more explicit and supply the desired detail. In the *Pratum Spirituale* of John Moschus (d. A.D. 619) we find a story of a hermit who, before undertaking a journey, was in the habit of praying to an image of the Virgin and Child, which he had in his cave, and of lighting a candle before it. He would ask the Virgin not only to grant him a prosperous journey, but also to look after the candle during his absence. As a result he always found it burning upon his return even if he had stayed away as long as six months.<sup>38</sup> Even if one takes a sceptical view and assumes that this particular tale did not form part of John's original work, which underwent changes and additions in course of time,<sup>39</sup> the use of lights before images is attested also by the Life of St. Symeon the Younger (d. A.D. 592), written not long after the Saint's death.<sup>40</sup> This author tells of a citizen of Antioch who, after having been cured of an illness by the Saint, put up an image of his benefactor over the door of his workshop in a conspicuous and public place in the city and adorned it with curtains as well as lights for the sake of greater honor.<sup>41</sup> In the younger version of the invention of the miraculous image of Christ at Camuliana, a text which goes under the name of Gregory of Nyssa but was written, according to Dobschuetz, sometime during the seventh century, we hear of a hanging lamp and an incense burner placed in front of the pic-

<sup>35</sup> T. Tobler, *Itinera et descriptiones terrae sanctae*, I (Geneva, 1877) 104. Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 99°, has what appears to be a better text, taken from Gildemeister's edition.

<sup>36</sup> Tobler, *op. cit.*, 116. Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 135°.

<sup>37</sup> Tobler, *op. cit.*, 156. Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 109°.

<sup>38</sup> Joannes Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale*, c.180 (PG 87 ter, col. 3052). The story was quoted at the Council of 787: Mansi, XIII, 193 E–196 C.

<sup>39</sup> K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, 2nd edition (Munich, 1897) 187 f. Th. Nissen, "Unbekannte Erzählungen aus dem Pratum spirituale," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXXVIII (1938) 351 ff., especially, 353. E. Mioni, "Il Pratum Spirituale di Giovanni Mosco," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, XVII (1951) 61 ff., especially 81.

<sup>40</sup> For this Life and its attribution to Arcadius, bishop of Cyprus, see H. Delehaye, *Les Saints Stylites = Subsidia Hagiographica*, 14 (Brussels and Paris, 1923) pp. LIX ff.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted by John of Damascus (PG 94, col. 1393 D) and at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, col. 76 DE).

ture.<sup>42</sup> The writer furnishes the image of Christ with paraphernalia which, as we have seen, were accorded to imperial images already in the fifth century.<sup>43</sup>

It will be noted that some of the pictures in the stories just quoted are located in places other than churches. At least one of them, the image owned by John Moschus' hermit, is purely an object of private devotion. Religious images had existed in private dwellings before this time,<sup>44</sup> but it is striking how frequently we hear of such objects in the hagiographic literature of the late sixth and seventh centuries.<sup>45</sup> From the texts one gets the impression that images of Christ, the Virgin, and the Saints became common in the domestic sphere at that time. Once admitted to that sphere their use and abuse was beyond control.

We know that images were prayed to ever since the days of Augustine and Epiphanius. The prayers may be acts of veneration, such as Antoninus of Piacenza seems to describe, or a means of obtaining specific favors. Prayers of the latter kind are common in miracle stories.<sup>46</sup> What gestures and actions such prayers entailed is often left vague, but genuflections and *proskynesis*, already attested in the early sixth century, as we have seen,

<sup>42</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 17\*\*; for the date of the text see *ibid.*, 27\*\*.

<sup>43</sup> See above, pp. 91 f. For a possibly interpolated episode in one of the miracles related in Sophronius' Encomium of Sts. Cyrus and John, in which an oil lamp burning before an image of Christ in the Tetracylon at Alexandria figures as an accessory, see below, p. 106. For a similar episode in the Coptic Encomium of St. Menas see below, pp. 106 f.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. e.g. above, p. 94 (images of the Elder St. Symeon); also a frequently quoted passage in St. John Chrysostom's Encomium of Meletius (PG 50, col. 516).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. the general statement with which Gregory of Tours prefaces a story of a miracle wrought by an image of Christ (*De gloria martyrum*, c.22; PL 71, col. 724 A), and, for specific instances of religious images in domestic contexts, the following texts: Photinus, Life of John the Faster (d. A.D. 593) as quoted at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, col. 85 B; see also below, pp. 108 f.); Joannes Moschus, *Pratum spirituale*, c. 45 (PG 87 ter, col. 2900 B-D; for this work see above n. 39); Life of St. Symeon the Younger (cf. above n. 40) as quoted at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, col. 76 B and DE; the second passage also in John of Damascus' Third Oration: PG 94, col. 1393 D); Arculf, *Relatio de locis sanctis*, III, 5 (Tobler, *op. cit.*, 200); Life of St. John Chrysostom, as quoted by John of Damascus (PG 94, col. 1277 C) and by later authors (for this text, which goes under the name of George of Alexandria, see C. Baur, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXVII [1927] 1 ff., especially 5, 6, and 9: The episode which concerns us seems to have been invented by the writer, who was active between 680 and 725). We may add some examples whose pre-Iconoclastic date is less certain: Lives of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, Miracle 15 (L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian* [Leipzig and Berlin, 1907] 137 f.; Mansi, XIII, col. 68 B; Deubner, *op. cit.*, 82, and apparently also Delehay, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 43 [1925] 8 ff., consider this text as pre-Iconoclastic); story of an image of Christ at Beirut, related at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, col. 25 B); and a related story in a Coptic sermon on the Virgin (W. H. Worrell, *The Coptic Manuscripts in the Freer Collection* [New York, 1923] 369 f.; for the dates of the two last-named texts see below, n. 59).

<sup>46</sup> See below, p. 108.

are mentioned repeatedly by writers of the seventh century.<sup>47</sup> A story in which some devout workmen, in addition to saluting an image of the Virgin, “embraced it and kissed its hands and feet and continued to salute it a long time pressing it to their bosoms in great faith” unfortunately cannot be dated with any precision.<sup>48</sup> But there can be no doubt, in the light of the sources just quoted, that during the late sixth and seventh centuries devotional practices in front of images became elaborate, common and intense.

Two episodes deserve separate notices because they show that the increasing cult of religious images extended beyond the sphere of private piety. In A.D. 656 a theological disputation was held between Maximus Confessor and Theodosius, Bishop of Caesarea, in the castrum of Bizya in Bithynia, where Maximus was confined. At a given point in the proceedings when agreement appeared to have been reached, all participants rose, prayed, kissed the gospel book, the cross and the icons of Christ and the Virgin, in whose presence the conversation was evidently held, and placed their hands on these objects in confirmation (*βεβαίωσις*) of what had been transacted.<sup>49</sup> Here we are confronted with an official ecclesiastical ceremony enacted by clerics and featuring icons as quasi-legal instruments along with the book of the gospels on which oaths had been sworn ever since the fourth century.<sup>50</sup>

An even more public and conspicuous employment of an icon by priests was recorded at the very beginning of our period in the earliest extant account of the image of Christ at Camuliana. In this text, which is contained in an anonymous Syriac compilation apparently completed in A.D. 569, we are told that in the years from 554 to 560 a copy of the miraculous image was carried by priests in solemn procession through various cities in Asia Minor in order to collect funds for a church and a village destroyed in a barbarian

<sup>47</sup> Joannes Moschus, episode quoted above, n. 45; Life of St. Symeon the Younger (cf. above, n. 40) as quoted by John of Damascus (*PG* 94, col. 1396 B) and at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, col. 77 B); Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon (d. A.D. 613) by his pupil George, c.13 (Th. Ioannes, *Mnemeia Hagiologika* [Venice, 1884] 372; Mansi, XIII, col. 92 AB); Arculf, *Relatio de locis sanctis*, III, 4 (Tobler, *op. cit.*, 198). For a possibly interpolated episode in Sophronius' Encomium of Sts. Cyrus and John, in which the two Saints – perhaps themselves part of a picture – are seen in a dream prostrating themselves before an image of Christ, see below, p. 106.

<sup>48</sup> Worrell, *op. cit.*, 370; cf. above, n. 45 and, for the date, below, n. 59.

<sup>49</sup> *S. Maximi Confessoris Acta*, II, 18 and 26 (*PG* 90, cols. 156 AB, 164 AB); quoted by John of Damascus (*PG* 94, cols. 1316 BC, 1413 B) and at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, cols. 37 E–40 B). For the date of the dispute cf. V. Grumel, in *Echos d'Orient*, XXVI (1927) 31; for the Acts cf. Krumbacher, *op. cit.*, 64; for *βεβαίωσις* below, p. 122.

<sup>50</sup> Joannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae de statuis*, XV, 5 (*PG* 49, col. 160, last paragraph); cf. *Codex Iustinianus*, 2, 58, 2; 3, 1, 14, 4; 7, 72, 10, 3. See also E. Seidl, *Der Eid im roemisch-aegyptischen Provinzialrecht*, II (Munich, 1935) pp. 48 ff.; *ibid.*, p. 49, perhaps another instance of an oath rendered before images of saints (Papyrus London, 1674: “before A.D. 570”). Cf. also John of Damascus, *De imaginibus oratio II*, 21 (*PG* 94, 1308 C).

raid.<sup>51</sup> Here an image of Christ is described as receiving the same kind of public display which was traditional in the cult of the imperial image.<sup>52</sup> The parallelism was not lost on the contemporaries. Our Syriac author, having said that the procession was organized for the highly practical purpose of fund raising, apparently was dissatisfied with so materialistic a motivation and proceeded to interpret the procession as symbolic of the Second Advent of the King and Lord, which he considered imminent.<sup>53</sup> The author himself, then,—and, possibly, the clergy (assuming that the event described is authentic) — was quite aware that the ceremony was essentially a royal or imperial one. We shall return to this point later.

Perhaps one can even go one step further and discover in the author's remarks overtones of a belief in a possible magic efficacy of the ceremony described. Dobschuetz has already recalled in connection with this passage the entry in the *Chronicon Paschale* for the year 562 — the terminal year of the first Paschal cycle —, from which it seems that expectations of an imminent Second Advent were rife at the time when the procession is said to have taken place.<sup>54</sup> Could such ceremonial acts have been thought of as not only symbolizing but perhaps hastening the event? In so far as such overtones may be present in our text it leads us on to the subject of magic beliefs and practices, to which we shall now turn.

### *Magic*

In all acts of worship, even the most elaborate and intense, it is possible to claim — as was, in fact, maintained over and over again by defenders of images of all times — that the icons served merely as a symbol, a reminder, a representative of the deity or saint for whom the honor is intended. Wherever magic is involved this claim tends to become void. The common denominator of all beliefs and practices, which attribute magic properties to

<sup>51</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, p. 6\*\* f. (using, with minor changes, Noeldeke's translation published by R. A. Lipsius, "Zur edessenischen Abgarsage," *Jahrbuecher fuer protestantische Theologie*, VII [1881] 189 ff.); F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zacharias of Mitylene translated into English* (London, 1899) 321; K. Ahrens and G. Krueger, *Die sogenannte Kirchengeschichte des Zacharias Rhetor* (Leipzig, 1899) 248 f. On the date of this text cf. Hamilton and Brooks, *op. cit.*, 5; Ahrens and Krueger, *op. cit.*, XVI; A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn, 1922) 184.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. above, pp. 90 f. and below, p. 122. Cf. also the processions in Rome in which the *Acheiropoieta* of the Lateran was solemnly paraded, and the imperial antecedents of these processions as pointed out by W. F. Volbach ("Il Cristo di Sutri e la venerazione del SS. Salvatore nel Lazio," *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia di Archeologia*, XVII [1940–41] 97 ff., especially 124 f. — a reference which I owe to Prof. Grabar). There is no proof, however, that the Roman processions *with the image* were instituted in pre-Iconoclastic times.

<sup>53</sup> All the translators quoted above, n. 51, agree that this is the general meaning of the passage, though they differ in detail.

<sup>54</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 8\*\*.

an image, is that the distinction between the image and the person represented is to some extent eliminated, at least temporarily. This tendency to break down the barrier between image and prototype is the most important feature of the cult of images in the period under review.

It is likely that in the popular mind the barrier was never very formidable, even in ordinary worship. Indeed, we already found in literary sources of the fifth century occasional signs of a belief in the magic efficacy of certain representations.<sup>55</sup> But the true era of such beliefs starts in the second half of the sixth century. Their clearest expression is the tremendous vogue which miracle stories then began to enjoy.

In the miracle stories, some of which are thinly disguised or rationalized as dreams, the image acts or behaves as the subject itself is expected to act or behave. It makes known its wishes, as in the well known story told by Gregory of Tours of a painted picture of the crucified Christ at Narbonne, which demands to be covered.<sup>56</sup> It enacts evangelical teachings, as in the dream in which an image of Christ at Antioch appears clothed with garments previously given to a beggar.<sup>57</sup> When attacked it bleeds, as it does in another story told by Gregory of Tours about an image of Christ pierced by a Jew,<sup>58</sup> and in a story about an attack by Saracens on an image of St. Theodore, which John of Damascus quotes from the writings of Anastasius Sinaita (A.D. 640–700).<sup>59</sup> In some cases it defends itself against infidels with physical force, for instance, in a previously quoted story about an image of St. Symeon

<sup>55</sup> See above, p. 94.

<sup>56</sup> *De gloria martyrum*, c. 23 (PL 71, col. 724 f.).

<sup>57</sup> The story was published by Th. Nissen, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXXVIII (1938) 367 f., no. 12, from the Vienna codex of the *Pratum spirituale* of Joannes Moschus (Cod. hist. gr. 42). For this work see above, n. 39.

<sup>58</sup> *De gloria martyrum*, c. 22 (PL 71, col. 724).

<sup>59</sup> PG 94, col. 1393 A–C; for the author see Krumbacher, *op. cit.*, 64 ff. These are the first of a whole series of such legends in Byzantine and medieval literature. The most famous is the story of an icon of Christ at Beirut related at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, cols. 24 ff.) and many times subsequently (cf. Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 280\*\* ff.). The Beirut legend, in which the icon is made to undergo Christ's entire Passion at the hands of Jews and, quite logically, produces water as well as blood when pierced, is so much more elaborate than the simple tale related by Gregory of Tours that one is inclined to attribute it to a more advanced date. It may, in fact, be an invention of an apologist of orthodoxy during the first Iconoclastic period. In Sigebert's early twelfth century chronicle the events related in the story are placed in the year A.D. 765 (PL 160, col. 145). A Coptic sermon, which falsely claims as its author Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, relates a story of an icon of the Virgin which shares many features with the Beirut legend. It is, however, so much less coherent that it should probably be regarded as a derivative of the latter (Worrell, *op. cit.* — above, n. 45 —, pp. 367 ff.; for other derivatives see Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 281\*\* f., n. 3). The seventh century date suggested for this work by E. H. Kantorowicz (in *Varia Variorum: Festgabe fuer Karl Reinhardt* [Muenster and Cologne, 1952] p. 188 n. 36) may therefore be too early. The only safe *terminus ante quem* is the date of the Ms., which was written in A.D. 975 (Worrell, *op. cit.*, 125).



at Antioch related in the Life of that Saint,<sup>60</sup> and in a legend told by Arculf in connection with an image of St. George on a column in Lydda, to which the Saint was allegedly tied while being scourged.<sup>61</sup> In others it demonstrates its immunity to attack through various miraculous deeds.<sup>62</sup> It makes promises.<sup>63</sup> But it also demands fulfillment of promises made to it by others, as in a second story told by Arculf in connection with the image of St. George at Lydda.<sup>64</sup> By far the most common type of miracle, however, is that in which the image bestows some kind of material benefit upon its votaries.

<sup>60</sup> For references see above, n. 41.

<sup>61</sup> *Relatio de locis sanctis*, III, 4 (Tobler, *op. cit.*, 195 ff.).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Arculf's story of an image of the Virgin miraculously exuding oil after it had been rescued from desecration (*Relatio*, III, 5; Tobler, *op. cit.*, 200). Cf. also the miracles operated by the Beirut image (Mansi, XIII, col. 29 AB) and the parallel motif in the related Coptic legend (Worrell, *op. cit.*, 372).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. the dream of the Emperor Mauricius (d. A.D. 602), in which the image of Christ of the Chalke Gate promises him that he may expiate his sins in this life. Though the story refers to events of the early seventh century it should perhaps not be included among legends of the pre-Iconoclastic period, since it is known only from later sources (Theophanes, *Chronographia*; Bonn ed., p. 439 f. Zonaras, *Epit. Hist.*, XIV, 13, 30 ff.; Bonn ed., III, 194 f. Nicephoros Callistes, *Eccles. Hist.*, XVIII, 42; PG 147, col. 413). But there is at least a possibility that it is actually of early origin. I owe to Mr. C. A. Mango's unpublished thesis on the Chalke knowledge of what appears to be part of the original version of the story in an excerpt from the early seventh century chronicle known as that of John of Antioch (*Excerpta historica iussu Imperatoris Constantini Porphyrogeniti confecta*, III: *Excerpta de insidiis*, ed. C. De Boor [Berlin, 1905] p. 148, no. 108). In this text there is no specific mention of Christ or Christ's image; but Mauricius' vision takes place at the Chalke, and it is difficult to make sense of the story without giving it some such meaning as Theophanes gave it in the early ninth century. The suspicion that the version in the *Excerpta* may be incomplete is strengthened by the fact that "expiation now rather than later" was, indeed, the subject of a request of Mauricius to Christ according to Theophylaktos Simokatta, another nearly contemporary writer (*Historiae*, VIII, 11, 6, ed. De Boor [Leipzig, 1887] 305). If this reasoning is sound it would prove, incidentally, that the famous Christ image of the Chalke was in existence about the year A.D. 600. As Mr. Mango points out, this image actually came to be known as the "Guarantor" (*ἀντιφωνητής*), and seems to have been the archetype of later icons bearing that epithet. It had been suggested already by Ducange (*Historia Byzantina*, II [Paris, 1680] 116) that the two texts in which the Antiphonetes image first appears both relate to the image of the Chalke, though they refer to it as located in the Chalkoprateia. One of these texts is a, presumably spurious, letter of Pope Gregory II to the Emperor Leo III (I. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, III, 2 [Paris, 1910] p. 608), the other the well-known story of the Jew Abraham and his Christian debtor, the most elaborate example of an icon not only making a promise, but also fulfilling it (Fr. Combefis, *Historia haeresis monothelitarum* [Paris, 1648] cols. 611 ff.). While the first-named text obviously is not pre-Iconoclastic, the second may have an early nucleus. It contains an interesting passage about "silver with five stamps" (*ibid.*, col. 641A), a passage which has provided the key to an understanding of the actually extant hall-marks on Byzantine silver objects of the sixth and seventh centuries (I. I. Smirnov, in *Zapiski of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society* [in Russian], N. S. XII [1901] 505 ff.; M. Rosenberg, *Der Goldschmiede Merkzeichen*, 3rd ed., IV [Berlin, 1928] 615 f.; L. Matzulewitsch, *Byzantinische Antike* [Berlin and Leipzig, 1929] 1 f.). In this sense the claim that the events described in the story took place in the time of Heraclius (Combefis, *op. cit.*, col. 616 B) is in striking agreement with archaeological evidence.

<sup>64</sup> *Relatio*, III, 4 (Tobler, *op. cit.*, 197 f.).

Foremost in this category is the famous story of the image of Christ at Edessa and the role it allegedly played during the Persian siege of that city in A.D. 544. Whether the story actually originated at that time or only in the ensuing decades, it is one of the first instances in Christian literature of a specific miraculous benefit ascribed to a religious image. The incident is first referred to at the end of the sixth century in the Ecclesiastical History of Euagrius.<sup>65</sup> In Procopius' account of the siege, which was written shortly after the event, and on which Euagrius' text is admittedly based, there is no mention of the image, let alone a miracle. Dobschuetz<sup>66</sup> and, following him, Runciman<sup>67</sup> have suggested that, in spite of Procopius' silence, the legend has a historical foundation. According to this view an icon of Christ played a part in the defense, was considered by certain groups in the city as the true source of victory, and thus became the miraculous image of subsequent fame. Be this as it may, the story certainly became known within fifty years of the victory. It points up the rise of the belief in the magic power of images better than any other miraculous tale. Dobschuetz has pointed out that the miraculous intercession of the image is nothing but a materialized proof of the ancient belief that the city of Edessa enjoyed the special protection of Christ. In His famous letter to King Abgar Christ is said to have promised that no enemy should ever enter the city. Procopius relates that Christ's letter was inscribed on the city gate in lieu of any other phylactery.<sup>68</sup> Although he himself doubts the authenticity of the promise, he also tells us that the Persian King's ambition to capture the city was due to the unbeliever's attempt to disprove Christ's power and the validity of His promise.<sup>69</sup> If the siege was a test of Christ's power even for the enemy it is natural that the failure of the enterprise should have been ascribed by the defenders to divine intervention. But the significant point is that this intervention should have been thought — if not already at the time at any rate soon thereafter — to have been effected by means of a picture. It is true that at Edessa the ground was prepared, though only vaguely and theoretically, through an addition to the Abgar story known already in the fourth century according to which Christ sent to the King of Edessa not only a letter but His portrait as well.<sup>70</sup> But there is no record of that image's actually being considered extant, let alone of its being worshiped, at Edessa prior to the siege and

<sup>65</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 68\*\* ff.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 117 ff.

<sup>67</sup> St. Runciman, "Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa," *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, III (1931) 238 ff., especially 244.

<sup>68</sup> Procopius, *History of the Wars*, II, 12, 26 (Loeb ed., I, pp. 368 ff.).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 12, 6 ff., especially 30 (pp. 364 ff., 370).

<sup>70</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 113, 171\* (*Doctrina Addai*).



Procopius tells us that the city's only *apotropaion* was the letter inscribed on the gate. The idea of making the protection traditionally vouchsafed by Christ concrete in an image was a recent development in the time of Euagrius. The story reveals not a new and more intense faith, but a new desire to make the object of that faith palpable. Here undoubtedly lies a mainspring of magic beliefs and practices. Charged with the task of making Christ's protection manifest, the image cannot remain passive. It becomes an extension and executive organ of divine power and it is only logical that in Euagrius' account of the siege the image is not merely described as present in the city but as taking an active part in the defense at the most critical moment. The very appropriateness of the visual presentation makes it impossible to pretend that it is merely a metaphor. The barrier between image and subject breaks down. Christ is palpably present in His image and fulfills His promise through it.

The manner of the alleged intervention of the image is also worth noting. According to Euagrius the image was instrumental in kindling a fire which consumed an artificial hill built by the Persians as an assault tower. It brought about this effect through the intermediary of water which was sprinkled on the divine countenance before being applied to the fire.<sup>71</sup> The seemingly paradoxical, and therefore all the more miraculous, phenomenon of fire being fanned by water is based on Procopius' account where it is given a perfectly rational explanation.<sup>72</sup> But it also brings the Edessa story into line with a group of miracle stories in which images — like saints<sup>73</sup> and relics<sup>74</sup> — exercise their beneficial effects through some intermediary substance.

Before turning to these stories we must speak of one text of the same period which belongs to the class of factual reporting rather than edifying fiction, and suggests that stories such as Euagrius' account of the siege of Edessa, whatever their historical foundation, reflected — or, perhaps, stimulated — actual magic practices involving images. In his description of his journey to the Holy Land Antoninus of Piacenza tells us of an image of Christ which was visible on the Column of the Flagellation in Sion Church.<sup>75</sup> Actually, according to Antoninus, this was not really a complete image but merely an impression of Christ's chest and hands miraculously left on the

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 70\*, line 35 ff.

<sup>72</sup> Procopius, *op. cit.*, II, 27, 14 (Loeb ed., I, p. 506).

<sup>73</sup> K. Holl, "Der Anteil der Styliten am Aufkommen der Bilderverehrung," reprinted in his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, II (Tübingen, 1928) 388 ff., especially 396 f.; cf. also Nicephoros Uranos, *Vita S. Symeonis Iunioris*, c. 7 (PG 86 bis, col. 3037 D).

<sup>74</sup> See below, p. 119.

<sup>75</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 139\*, after Gildemeister; the text in Tobler, *op. cit.*, 103, is misleading, as Dobschuetz points out.

stone while He was tied to it. Already forty years earlier, however, the pilgrim Theodosius had claimed that not only Christ's arms and hands but also His face were impressed on the column.<sup>76</sup> The object evidently was a borderline case between simple relic and miraculously produced image, a phenomenon characteristic of the period of incipient intensification of the cult of images.<sup>77</sup> What interests us at the moment is Antoninus' statement that from this impression *pro singulis languoribus mensura tollatur; exinde et circa collum habent et sanantur*. This at first sight somewhat puzzling practice is mentioned once more in the next chapter in connection with the impression of Christ's feet seen by Antoninus on the stone on which He had stood during His interrogation in the Praetorium of Pilate.<sup>78</sup> Dobschuetz suggested that *mensurae* were wax impressions which were used as amulets.<sup>79</sup> But no such meaning of the word is known. Unless and until the term is shown to have been used in this sense in other contexts we are obliged to take it literally as signifying measure.<sup>80</sup> We must assume that persons suffering from disease took from the reproductions of Christ's body the measurements of the appropriate limb. They must have done this either by means of a string, a strip of papyrus, or similar material, which they then tied around their necks with salutary effects, or by means of a ruler, in which case they must then have transcribed the numerical value on a small tablet suitable for suspension as an amulet. The belief in the importance of measurements, which Antoninus' report reveals, calls to mind a practice known to have been employed by early medieval architects when confronted with the task of building a copy of the Holy Sepulchre. Rather than attempt a faithful reproduction of the Anastasis in Jerusalem they were apt to be satisfied with a selective inclusion of some of the principal measurements of that building in a structure of sometimes quite dissimilar shape.<sup>81</sup> The practice of sixth century pilgrims in Sion Church and the Praetorium of Pilate, as described by Antoninus, helps to explain this phenomenon. A transfer of measurements was enough to insure a transfer of the divine powers believed to reside in the original building. On the other hand, the existence of such transfers in architecture shows that Antoninus' *mensurae* may, indeed, be taken literally.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Tobler, *op. cit.*, 65.

<sup>77</sup> See below, p. 116.

<sup>78</sup> Tobler, *op. cit.*, 104.

<sup>79</sup> *Op. cit.*, 139\*.

<sup>80</sup> *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, VIII, 5 (Leipzig, 1949) col. 762, lines 61–64 (s.v. *mensura*).

<sup>81</sup> R. Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of medieval Architecture,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, V (1942) 1 ff., especially 4, 12 f.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. in general for measurements as "sympathetic parts and representatives" *Reallexikon fuer Antike und Christentum*, edited by Th. Klauser, fasc. 1 (Stuttgart, 1950) col. 17 (s.v. *Abmessen*).

To the pilgrim measurements served as intermediaries between image and objective just as, according to Euagrius, water did to the defenders of Edessa.

In a number of stories relating miraculous cures we hear of other vehicles serving as intermediaries. Already Rufinus' version of the Paneas story had envisaged an intermediary of this kind: A real herb growing at the feet of the bronze group and deriving its healing power from its contact with the figure of Christ.<sup>83</sup> The seventh century *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* tells of a cure being effected through dew drops which fall from an icon of Christ as the patient is set down at the entrance to the altar;<sup>84</sup> and of another cure accompanied by a mysterious sweetness, more delicate than honey, felt in the mouth when praying to an image of Christ.<sup>85</sup> One of the miraculous cures related in Sophronius' *Encomium of St. Cyrus and John* is effected through the intermediary of oil taken from a lamp which burns before an image of Christ in the Tetrapylon at Alexandria. The image is the source of the beneficial power of the oil at least by implication.<sup>86</sup> A similar motif figures in an

<sup>83</sup> See above, p. 94.

<sup>84</sup> *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, c. 8; Ioannes, *op. cit.* (above, n. 47), 368. The icon stood "ἐπάνωθεν . . . αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ σταυροδόχῳ," i.e. above him — or perhaps, more plausibly, above the altar — in a receptacle for [a relic of] the Holy Cross, which is important in view of other instances in which icons appear to owe their miraculous powers to an association with relics (see below, p. 116). E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford, 1948) 91, translate: ". . . above him where the cross was set there hung an icon . . .," but they are not happy about their own translation; cf. *ibid.*, 187. Holl's interpretation of the passage as indicating the existence of an icon above the chancel parapet has no basis in the Greek text ("Die Entstehung der Bilderwand in der griechischen Kirche," reprinted in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, II, 225 ff., especially 230).

<sup>85</sup> c. 13; Ioannes, *op. cit.*, 372.

<sup>86</sup> Sophronius, *SS. Cyri et Ioannis Miracula*, c. 36 (PG 87 ter, cols. 3548 ff., especially col. 3560 CD). In an earlier part of this long and complicated tale the author had spoken of the healing powers of oil taken from the lamps which burn before the relic shrines of martyrs (col. 3553 C) and it would seem that in the final denouement he assigns to the Christ image a pointedly analogous role as a source of the beneficial power of the oil. Image and relic thus appear to be deliberately placed on the same level. But it is not sure whether this text is really a single, unified composition. Already in the section preceding the cure itself great prominence is given to a picture: The patient (a heretic, whom the two Saints have just managed to convert to orthodoxy by force and by threats) has a dream in which he is taken by the Saints to a wonderful and immensely tall church. Inside he sees a huge picture showing Christ surrounded by the Virgin, St. John, and some of the apostles, prophets, and martyrs. Among the latter are also Sts. Cyrus and John. The two Saints — it is not clear whether the "originals" who had taken him to the church or their representations in the painting — then prostrate themselves before Christ and ask him for orders to cure the patient. After two unsuccessful applications Christ finally agrees. The patient is instructed to go to the Tetrapylon at Alexandria, where, after having fasted and slept, he is to gather a little oil from the lamp which burns before the image of Christ. This he is to bring back to the Saints, whereupon an application of the oil will cure him. He wakes up, acts according to the instructions, and is cured. It should be noted that part of this narrative may be interpolated. Neither the large composition with Christ and the

episode in the Coptic Encomium of St. Menas, a text which unfortunately cannot be dated with any precision.<sup>87</sup>

Instances where an image exerts its power not through an intermediary substance but through direct physical contact are not very common. John Moschus tells of a woman who obtained water from a dry well by lowering into it an image of the saintly abbot Theodore, specially procured for the purpose from his monastery in Cilicia.<sup>88</sup> In one of the miracles of St. Artemius, composed sometime before A.D. 668, a diseased member is cured through an application of the melted wax of a seal bearing the Saint's portrait. The patient had found the seal in his hands after awakening from a dream during incubation at the sanctuary of the Saint. In the dream St. Artemius himself had appeared and had given him the seal "to drink."<sup>89</sup>

Saints nor the image of Christ in the Tetracyon can be assumed with certainty to have figured in the original version of the story, since just before the first of these pictures is introduced the narrative changes abruptly from the third to the first person. There is at least a suspicion that originally the story involved no images at all. On the other hand, the grammatical inconsistency may be due simply to Sophronius' peculiar methods of composition (cf. Delehay, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, 43 [1925] 20 ff.), and since the story was known in its present form already to John of Damascus, who quotes it in his Third Oration (PG 94, cols. 1413 ff.), it cannot be later than the early years of Iconoclasm. The text was quoted also at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, 57 D–60 B). For the importance of the composition described in the dream in connection with the early history of the "Deesis" iconography, see E. H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1946) p. 50 f., n. 129 (with further references).

<sup>87</sup> The Saint's mother, grieved about her childlessness, prays to an image of the Virgin, dips her finger in the oil of the lamp burning before the image and thereupon hears a voice from the mouth of the Christ Child held in the Virgin's arms, saying: "Amen." She conceives in the following night. Cf. J. Drescher, *Apa Mena* (Cairo, 1946) 133; for the date, *ibid.*, 127. See also below, n. 138. The idea of an icon exercising its miraculous power through an intermediary substance also plays a role in the story of the Christ image of Beirut, in which cures are effected by the blood and water exuded by the image (Mansi, XIII, col. 29 AB; cf. above, nn. 59, 62).

<sup>88</sup> *Pratum spirituale*, c. 81 (PG 87 ter, col. 2940 AB); quoted at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, col. 193 DE). For the date of this work see above, n. 39.

<sup>89</sup> A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Zapiski of the Hist.-Phil. Faculty of the Imperial University of St. Petersburg*, XCV (1909) 16 f.; for the date, *ibid.*, p. II; cf. also P. Maas, in *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbuecher*, I (1920) 377 ff.; H. Delehay, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, XLIII (1925) 32 ff. In Miracle no. 13 of Sts. Cosmas and Damian an application of an ointment made from a *κηρωτή* is prescribed by the Saints as a prophylactic treatment (Deubner, *op. cit.*, p. 134, line 50 ff.). From the context it would seem that this *κηρωτή* is identical with an image of the Saints mentioned earlier in the story as an amulet owned by the patient's husband (*ibid.*, p. 132, lines 4 ff.; p. 133, lines 13 ff., 33 ff.; for this see also below, p. 148). In other words, it appears to be an object analogous to that which figures in the miracle of St. Artemius. *Κηρωτή*, however, does not always imply an image; cf. other miracles of Sts. Cosmas and Damian in which it appears simply as an ointment distributed to the sick at the sanctuary of the Saints (*ibid.*, p. 232, s.v. *κηρωτή*; also Delehay, *op. cit.*, 13; Maas, *op. cit.*, 380). A clear case of the material substance of an image serving as a medicine occurs in Miracle no. 15 of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, in which a patient mixes plaster from a fresco depicting the two holy physicians with water and drinks it with salutary effects (Deubner, *op. cit.*, 137 f., lines 17 ff.; cf. also below, pp. 147 f.). For the problem of the date of these Miracles see above, n. 45.

Crude as such practices may seem, what Antoninus of Piacenza tells us about the *mensurae* suggests that the hagiographical writers of the seventh century did not stray too far from the realities of their time. In many stories, however, the desired result is obtained without there being any material contact, direct or indirect, between image and beneficiary. Quite commonly a prayer, often accompanied by *proskynesis* before the image, is enough to make the miracle operative. We have already heard of John Moschus' story of the anchorite who successfully implored the Virgin to look after the candle burning before Her image during his absence.<sup>90</sup> When the image of Edessa becomes the instrument of King Abgar's miraculous cure – a development of that ancient legend which Dobschuetz places soon after the events of A.D. 544 – the ailing king is described as obtaining health by falling down and worshipping the image sent to him by Christ.<sup>91</sup> In the Life of St. Mary the Egyptian, ascribed to Sophronius, access to a church previously barred to her as if by divine force is granted to the repentant sinner after she has prayed to an image of the Virgin in the atrium.<sup>92</sup> In the Miracles of St. Anastasius the Persian we are told of a woman who is cured of a sickness, previously inflicted upon her as a result of her refusal to worship the relics of the Saint upon their arrival in Caesarea, when she prostrates herself at the newly erected shrine containing an image of the Saint as well as his relics.<sup>93</sup> The *translatio* of the relics took place in A.D. 631, but our text, which was read at the Council of 787,<sup>94</sup> cannot be claimed with certainty to antedate the Iconoclastic period.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, in this story the healing power seems to emanate from the relics rather than from the picture. The latter – and this is a frequent motif in hagiographic texts – serves mainly to enable the patient to identify the saint who had previously appeared to her in a dream. But we may close our survey of magic cures and benefits with two stories which can be attributed with reasonable certainty to authors of the pre-Iconoclastic period, and which leave no doubt as to the magic power imputed to images. In both cases the writer makes special efforts to show that the mere presence of the image is enough to produce the desired effect. The first comes from the Life of John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople (d. 595), written soon after his death

<sup>90</sup> See above, p. 97.

<sup>91</sup> *Acta Thaddaei*, c. 4 (C. Tischendorf, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* [Leipzig, 1851] 262. Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, p. 182\*, no. 24; for the date *ibid.*, p. 121, p. 31\*\* f.).

<sup>92</sup> *Vita S. Mariae Aegyptiae*, c. 3 (PG 87 ter, col. 3712 f.); quoted at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, cols. 85 D–89 A). Sophronius' authorship, accepted by Krumbacher (*op. cit.*, 189), is doubted by O. Bardenhewer (*Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, V [Freiburg, 1932] 38) because of the style of the narrative.

<sup>93</sup> H. Usener, *Acta Martyris Anastasii Persae* (Bonn, 1894) 22 f.

<sup>94</sup> Mansi, XIII, cols. 21 C–24 C.

<sup>95</sup> Usener, *op. cit.*, p. V; Krumbacher, *op. cit.*, p. 192, no. 8.



by his disciple Photinus. This text is all the more interesting since it was evidently not composed for apologetic purposes. The demonstration of the power of the icon is a mere by-product of a story really intended to demonstrate the modesty of the Patriarch. Photinus had interceded with the latter on behalf of a woman who had been told by a hermit that her husband, who was plagued by an evil spirit, would be cured if she obtained in Constantinople an image of the Virgin blessed by the Patriarch. The Patriarch had been indignant at the suggestion that he, a sinful mortal, should be the instrument of such a miracle. Photinus then tells of the pious fraud which he perpetrated in order to satisfy the woman. He gave her an icon of the Virgin which looked rich enough to have come from the Patriarch. The end of the story is that this image, without any special blessing and by its mere presence in the house (where it had been “reverently and fittingly” placed on the wall of a room), chases away the evil demons.<sup>96</sup> The other story is from the Life of St. Symeon the Younger, and concerns an image of that Saint set up by a woman in her own home in gratitude for a cure which the Saint had effected in person. The icon worked many miracles. Thus it restored to health a woman suffering from an issue of blood who “coming in faith to look upon the image . . . said within herself: If I may only behold his likeness I shall be saved.” There can be no clearer profession of faith in the absolute power of an image.<sup>97</sup>

### *Palladia*

In the last two instances, in which no specific rites are performed, the role of the image might be described as simply apotropaic, except for the fact that it serves to remedy an evil rather than to prevent it. It is safe to assume that a purely prophylactic use of images by private individuals – attested, in connection with images of the Elder St. Symeon, already in the fifth century – also existed, and indeed flourished, along with other expressions of the belief in the magic power of images in the advanced sixth and seventh centuries.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Mansi, XIII, cols. 80 E–85 C; cf. Krumbacher, *op. cit.*, p. 187, no. 4.

<sup>97</sup> *Life of St. Symeon the Thaumaturgos*, c. 118 (A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Vizantiiskii Vremennik*, I [1894] 606 f.); quoted at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, cols. 73 C–76 C). See also below, pp. 144 f. For the authorship of the text see above, n. 40.

<sup>98</sup> The practice of placing an image ἐν . . . τοῖς τῶν ἐργαστηρίων προφυλαίοις, which had been mentioned by Theodoretus in connection with the apotropaic use of portraits of St. Symeon the Elder (above, n. 32) is described again in almost identical words in the Life of St. Symeon the Younger, apropos the story of a citizen of Antioch who wished to demonstrate his gratitude to the Saint (for references see above, n. 41). This parallelism was duly noted by H. Delehay, *Les Saints Stylites*, p. LXXI. Cf. also above, n. 89, and below p. 148 for Miracle no. 13 of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, in which an image of the two Saints carried as an amulet in the armpit (sic!) plays an essential role.

But aside from the private use of images as apotropaia, this period saw the beginning of what was to become one of the principal manifestations of the cult of images in Byzantium, namely, the employment of religious images as apotropaia and palladia for cities and armies, particularly in war time. This, of course, was an ancient pagan practice. Its revival has long been recognized as characteristic of the post-Justinianic era.<sup>99</sup>

The role of the image of Edessa in the siege of 544 as described by Euagrius is not really that of a palladium. As we have seen, Euagrius' account resembles ordinary miracle stories of the period. It differs from these only through the fact that a whole city, rather than an individual, is the beneficiary. The operation by which the power of the image is brought to bear on the fire takes place in secret in an underground passage. A palladium, on the other hand, is a public cult object recognized by all. It must be capable of instilling courage into those to whom it belongs and fear into their opponents, though in an emergency it may also be expected to perform specific acts. The image of Edessa did not play this role in the sixth century. But it is interesting to note that it gradually grew into something more like a palladium in later accounts of the siege. The letter addressed in 836 by the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem to the Emperor Theophilos has the Persians surround the city with fire and the bishop carry the sacred image in procession around the walls (as, indeed, had been done by this time more than once with other images in similar situations), with the result that a wind came and turned the flames back onto the enemy.<sup>100</sup> In the following century we find this public employment of the image combined with a version of Euagrius' secretly operated miracle, and the whole story preceded by the discovery of the image in a place appropriate for an apotropaion, namely, above the city gate, where it takes the place of Christ's verbal promise to King Abgar actually inscribed in that location according to Procopius.<sup>101</sup>

The evolution in the Edessa story from privately operated magic to public display and employment is symptomatic of the rise of Byzantine iconic palladia from the seedbed of popular beliefs. Actually, aside from this story, there are no other examples in the pre-Iconoclastic period in which images are actively and materially involved in military offense or defense. But even in the less active role in which they do make their appearance in the late

<sup>99</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 50 ff. Grabar, *Martyrium*, II, 352.

<sup>100</sup> L. Duchesne, "L'iconographie byzantine dans un document grec du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Roma e l'Oriente*, V (1912-13) 222 ff., 273 ff., 349 ff., especially 279 f.

<sup>101</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 110 ff. and 39\*\* ff. Dobschuetz suggests (112 f., 98\*\* f.) that the story of the rediscovery of the image may derive from a local Edessene tradition. This tradition may go back as far as the late sixth or early seventh century if he is right in his theory that Pseudo-Gregory's account of the image of Camuliana dates from the seventh century and was influenced by it (cf. 24\*\*). As we shall see presently, this is the time when religious images actually seem to have made their appearance on city gates.



sixth century the iconic apotropaia and palladia call to mind the similar — and in part earlier — use of saints' images in the domestic sphere.

Thus a number of icons which figure in the hagiographic legends of the post-Justinianic era are described as being situated not in churches or private houses but in public places and particularly on or near public gateways, where they evidently fulfill an apotropaic function comparable to that of the image of Edessa in the later versions of that story, but reminiscent also of the role of the images of St. Symeon the Elder on the doors of private workshops.<sup>102</sup> The Tetrapylon of Alexandria figures as the location of an image of Christ;<sup>103</sup> another Tetrapylon in the center of the city of Caesarea was chosen as the location of the shrine and image of St. Anastasius the Persian;<sup>104</sup> at Antioch there was an image of Christ at or near the gate of the Cherubim.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps the image of Christ of the Chalke, the main gateway of the imperial palace in Constantinople, also made its appearance at that time.<sup>106</sup>

Even more striking is the use of religious images as palladia in battle. Theophylaktos Simokatta (early seventh century) relates that in the year 586 the image of Christ not made by hand — according to Dobschuetz he refers to the image of Camuliana which was brought to Constantinople in 574 — was used by Philippikos in the battle of the Arzamon River to instil courage into his troops.<sup>107</sup> Less than a generation later Heraklius put his naval campaign designed to oust Phokas under divine tutelage by setting against "that Gorgon's head, that corrupter of virgins, the awe-inspiring image of the Pure Virgin."<sup>108</sup> In the following decade Heraklius, as master of the Empire, used the miraculous image of Christ — again we must think of the image of Camuliana — as a palladium in his Persian campaign.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>102</sup> See above, nn. 32, 98.

<sup>103</sup> See above, n. 86. The image survived the first Iconoclastic period and was still in existence in A.D. 787; cf. Mansi, XIII, col. 60 C.

<sup>104</sup> Usener, *op. cit.* (above, n. 93), p. 23.

<sup>105</sup> This image figures in the story referred to above, n. 57. For the locality named Cherubim and its relation to the city wall — and specifically to a gate — see G. Downey, in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 29 (1938) 167 ff.

<sup>106</sup> See above, n. 63.

<sup>107</sup> *Historiae*, II, 3, 4 ff., ed. De Boor (Leipzig, 1887) 73 f.; cf. Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 51 f., 127\* f.

<sup>108</sup> Georgios Pisides, *Heraclias*, II, 13 ff.; Bonn ed., 79. Cf. A. Frolov, "La dédicace de Constantinople dans la tradition byzantine," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, CXXVII (1944) 61 ff., especially p. 104. Strangely enough, Dobschuetz (*op. cit.*, p. 52 f., n. 2 and p. 128\*) ignores this passage and is puzzled by the fact that Theophanes, according to him the earliest witness, names Georgios as his source. Theophanes amplifies Georgios' statement and speaks of shrines (κιβώτια) and icons of the Virgin on the masts of Heraclius' ships (Bonn ed., I, 459 f.).

<sup>109</sup> Georgios Pisides, *De expeditione persica*, I, 139 ff.; also II, 86 ff. (Bonn ed., 9, 17). Cf. Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 53, 129\*.

More memorable than any of these occasions was the role played by images in the defense of Constantinople during the siege of the Avars of 626. Of this we have an account by an eye-witness,<sup>110</sup> identified by Vasilievsky with Theodore Synkellos,<sup>111</sup> who tells us that the patriarch had images of the Virgin and Child painted on all the gates on the west side of the city "whence the breed of darkness came,"<sup>112</sup> and that later, when the city was threatened by fire, he carried the miraculous image of Christ around the walls imploring the Lord's help.<sup>113</sup> This is a historical record of images placed above gates and carried around walls during a siege, exactly as in the later versions of the Edessa story. The patriarch's procession around the walls with the miraculous image of Christ was recorded also by another contemporary, George Pisides.<sup>114</sup> In connection with the siege of Constantinople by the Arabs in 717 we hear once more of an image, this time that of the Virgin, carried around the walls together with the relics of the True Cross.<sup>115</sup> In all these instances the images are intended to produce a psychological and perhaps apotropaic effect, but they do not intervene to change the course of battle by direct magic action. The official use of images follows in the footsteps of private practice, but – except in the case of the siege of Edessa as described (or imagined) by Euagrius – it stops short of the extremes recorded in the sphere of popular devotion by pilgrims and hagiographers of the same period.<sup>116</sup>

### *Acheiropoietai*

In both private and public practices recorded in the foregoing pages images not made by human hands play a conspicuous role. Their rise to

<sup>110</sup> *De obsidione Constantinopolitana sub Heraclio Imp.*; A. Mai, *Patrum Nova Bibliotheca*, VI (Rome, 1853) pt. 2, pp. 423 ff.

<sup>111</sup> V. Vasilievsky, in *Vizantiiskii Vremennik*, III (1896) 91. This attribution has been accepted by recent authorities: cf. Frolov, *op. cit.*, 95 f.; A. A. Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946) 106; L. Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance* (Paris, 1947) 51 f., 545 (no. CCXLV). In Krumbacher's second edition the text is still listed as anonymous and undated (*op. cit.*, p. 251, no. 4, with a wrong citation of the pages of Mai's edition). Dobschuetz considered it to be a paraphrase of the sermon on the Akathistos composed after A.D. 717 (*op. cit.*, 132\* f.).

<sup>112</sup> Mai, *op. cit.*, 427.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>114</sup> Georgios Pisides, *Bellum avaricum*, 370 ff. (Bonn ed., 61 f.). Cf. Frolov, *op. cit.*, 95. This passage was omitted by Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 131\* ff.

<sup>115</sup> *Oratio historica in festum tes akathistou* (F. Combefis, *Hist. haer. monothel.*, cols. 805 ff., especially col. 818 C = PG, 92, col. 1365 C).

<sup>116</sup> For an instance in hagiographic literature of a saint's image serving as a palladium see below, n. 138 (Coptic Encomium of St. Menas, which, however, may not be of pre-Iconoclastic date).

prominence is indeed the best known aspect of the vogue of image worship in the second half of the sixth and the seventh centuries.<sup>117</sup> In regard to this subject we need do little more than summarize some well known facts.

Acheiropoietai are of two kinds: Either they are images believed to have been made by hands other than those of ordinary mortals or else they are claimed to be mechanical, though miraculous, impressions of the original. Neither type of image was entirely new in Christian worship in the second half of the sixth century. A story written in the early fifth century by a North African cleric concerns a painted *velum* which made its appearance under mysterious circumstances. The picture, which represented a miracle performed in the town of Uzala by the relics of St. Stephen, was given to a sub-deacon of the local church in a neighboring town, on the day after the miracle took place, by a stranger who probably was an angel rather than a man.<sup>118</sup> Evidently the speed with which the appearance of the finished picture followed the event it depicted, combined with the fact that its donor had never been seen in those parts before, indicated that the image was produced *non omnino absque mysterio dei*. This is what may be called a celestially produced image. A century later the pilgrim Theodosius was the first to mention a mechanical imprint of a sacred nature. We have already referred to his account of the Column of the Flagellation.<sup>119</sup> The impression of Christ's face and arms, which he claims to have seen impressed on it, is a secondary feature intended to enhance the value of the column as a relic by demonstrating in the most concrete fashion possible that Christ's body was in actual physical contact with the stone. An impression of the face is not really needed for this purpose. Indeed, a generation later we find Antoninus of Piacenza claiming only to have seen an impression of Christ's chest and hands on the column.<sup>120</sup>

Here the relic rather than the image remains the principal object of interest. But fullfledged acheiropoietai of Christ also appeared at this time. At Memphis Antoninus saw *pallium lineum in quo est effigies Salvatoris*, and he was told that this had been produced by Christ himself who had pressed the piece of cloth against His face.<sup>121</sup> This is an exact parallel to the legend concerning the miraculous origin of the image of Edessa, apparently elaborated about the same time. Dobschuetz has shown that probably not until after the siege of 544, when the portrait allegedly sent by Christ to Abgar

<sup>117</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, *passim*, especially p. 35; Grabar, *Martyrium*, II, 347. For the apologetic implications of the term ἀχειροποίητος see below, p. 143.

<sup>118</sup> For reference see above, n. 25.

<sup>119</sup> See above, n. 76.

<sup>120</sup> See above, n. 75.

<sup>121</sup> For references see above, n. 36; add Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 61 ff.

was first claimed to be extant,<sup>122</sup> did the tradition take shape that that portrait was produced not by an ordinary painter but by Christ Himself, who was said to have pressed His face against the piece of cloth.<sup>123</sup> Euagrius, the first to speak — at least by implication — of the image of Edessa as extant, presumably referred to this legend when he called it “the divinely wrought image, which human hands have not made.”<sup>124</sup>

Finally, the image of Camuliana also made its appearance at the same time. It was brought from Camuliana to Constantinople during the reign of Justin II in 574.<sup>125</sup> Its history had been recorded already some years before in the Syriac chronicle of 569, in which we are told that a woman who desired to see Christ face to face found it in a water basin in her garden.<sup>126</sup> It thus fits into the category of celestially produced images rather than into that of the direct impressions. But the image promptly produced a mechanical copy on the cloth in which it was wrapped by its finder, and this (or a second copy produced later) became known under the name of *ἄχειροποίητος*.<sup>127</sup> The two varieties of miraculous images are thus combined, but in the later version of the Camuliana story the origin of the image is brought into line with the Memphis and Edessa legends: Christ himself appears and presses His face against the cloth.<sup>128</sup>

Two points stand out from this survey: the images of Edessa and Camuliana, the most famous *acheiropoietai* of the pre-Iconoclastic period, as well as the more obscure one at Memphis, all made their appearance at almost exactly the same time.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, at this stage at least, the idea

<sup>122</sup> See above, pp. 103 f.

<sup>123</sup> The story first appears in the Greek *Acta Thaddaei*, c. 3 (see above, n. 91). Runciman, *op. cit.* (above, n. 67), 240, 245, ignores this text and quotes John of Damascus as the first to report the legend. On the other hand, Runciman asserts (242) that a miraculous reproduction of Christ's face on cloth had appeared in literature already at a much earlier date in connection with the Veronica legend. But the “*Death of Pilate*,” which he quotes in support of this statement is certainly not of the fourth century. Runciman ignores Dobschuetz' elaborate proof that the episode of a miraculously produced image is a medieval addition to the Pilate Cycle, an addition of which the “*Death of Pilate*” is not even the earliest representative (Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 248 f.; 278° f., no. 8; 301° f., no. 49).

<sup>124</sup> “τὴν θεόσευκτον εἰκόνα, ἣν ἀνθρώπων μὲν χεῖρες οὐκ εἰργάσαντο”; cf. Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 70°; also *ibid.*, 118. After Euagrius the earliest texts referring to the image as an existing one appear to be the Armenian treatise on images ascribed to Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh (Der Nersessian, *op. cit.* — above, n. 1 — p. 60) and the Syriac *sougitha* on the Cathedral of Edessa (A. Dupont-Sommer, in *Cahiers Archéologiques*, II [1947] 31, 35; A. Grabar, *ibid.*, 52 and, for the date of the text, 58).

<sup>125</sup> Cedrenus, *Hist. Comp.*, Bonn ed., I, 685.

<sup>126</sup> For references see above, n. 51.

<sup>127</sup> This is probably the earliest known use of the term in connection with a Christian image. See also below, p. 143.

<sup>128</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 9°° ff., especially 16°°.

<sup>129</sup> The only other *acheiropoieta* which figures in a text of definitely pre-Iconoclastic date is

of mechanical reproduction — originally a sideline of the cult of relics and sometimes curiously prophetic of methods used in photography — seems to be more popular than that of a celestial origin. It is tempting to seek an explanation for this preference in the fact that this type of legend epitomizes more clearly, concretely and dramatically than any amount of theory the role of the icon as an “extension,” an organ of the deity itself. It is the myth which fits most completely the magic concept of the icon and the belief in its divine power, crucial elements in the increased cult of images in the generations after Justinian.

### III. ROOTS AND CAUSES

The literary evidence reviewed in the foregoing pages is unmistakable. It clearly indicates a tremendous increase and intensification of the cult of images, beginning in the second half of the sixth century and lasting until the outbreak of Iconoclasm. One wonders how this striking development came about and why it took place at that particular time.

In a highly stimulating chapter, which forms the conclusion of his great work on the artistic aspects and expressions of the Early Christian cult of relics, A. Grabar has interpreted the vogue of image worship with which we are dealing as the beginning of a process whereby the icon replaced the relic as a principal object of devotion in the Greek Orthodox Church.<sup>130</sup> Although objections have been raised against this thesis,<sup>131</sup> as a general proposition it can hardly be doubted. We have already seen that in point of time the relic preceded the image as an object of worship.<sup>132</sup> Although in later periods the cult of relics continued side by side with the cult of images, certainly by comparison with the medieval West the relic played a smaller and the icon a much larger and more central role in later Greek Christianity. Nor can it be denied that the change of emphasis began in the

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an image of St. George on a column in Lydda, referred to in Arculf's *Relatio*, III, 4 (Tobler, *op. cit.*, 195 ff.; cf. above, nn. 47, 61, 64); Arculf does not claim to have seen it himself, as Dobschuetz asserts (*op. cit.*, 90), but only to have heard about it in Constantinople. For the relation of this image to the Column of the Flagellation of Christ and to later traditions about a miraculous image of the Virgin, also at Lydda, see Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 79 ff., 91 ff. Perhaps Arculf's report about a tapestry woven by the Virgin should also be mentioned here once more, since it refers to an image thought not to have been made by an ordinary mortal (see above, n. 37). Images allegedly painted by St. Luke probably cropped up only under Iconoclasm (Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 269\*\* ff.). The Roman acheiropoieta is mentioned for the first time under Pope Stephen II (752-7); cf. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis*, I (Paris, 1886) 443.

<sup>130</sup> Grabar, *Martyrium*, II, 343 ff.

<sup>131</sup> A. M. Schneider, in: F. Doelger and A. M. Schneider, *Byzanz* (Bern, 1952) 289.

<sup>132</sup> See above, pp. 89 f.



late sixth and seventh centuries and that the forms which the cult of icons took are strikingly similar to those one encounters in the cult of relics.<sup>133</sup>

Belief in magic power — the core of the great development in the cult of images — had been associated with relics all along. Moreover, in the Greek East the cult of relics had contained from the beginning a strong visual element and thus carried within it the germ of the subsequent change. One of the earliest and most eloquent statements in praise of relics was made by Gregory of Nyssa in his *Encomium of St. Theodore*.<sup>134</sup> He speaks of the faithful who treasures the dust he has collected from the martyr's tomb,<sup>135</sup> and he describes the delight of those who have had the great good fortune to touch the relics themselves: "Those who behold them embrace, as it were, the living body itself in its full flower, they bring eye, mouth, ear, all their senses into play, and then, shedding tears of reverence and passion, they address to the martyr their prayer of intercession as though he were hale and present." In this ecstatic passage, in which the shapeless relic is merely a tool for conjuring up the physical presence of the saint, one can discern something of the roots of future image worship. For if a sensual perception of the living form is the devout's primary need, it is obvious that the work of the painter and sculptor can be of greater assistance to him than a handful of dust and bones. It is in the body in its fulness that the martyr's glory is really beheld. Hence the pictorial rendering of the living form was able to inherit the virtues of the relic and to gain an equal, and eventually more than equal, importance.

Professor Grabar has found striking proof of his thesis in the observation that when the cult of images first began to spread widely it was usually concerned with an object which, because of its actual or reputed origin or because of its associations, partook of the nature of a relic or a *brandeum*.<sup>136</sup> Most of the early notices of adoration or other ceremonial worship of images, and also many of the early testimonies concerning magic beliefs and practices, involve either *acheiropoietai*, which were thought to owe their existence to direct contact with a divine person and — in the case of mechanical impressions — actually started as "by-products" of relics;<sup>137</sup> or images which, though man-made, were physically associated with sacred relics;<sup>138</sup> or,

<sup>133</sup> Grabar, *op. cit.*, 357, and below p. 119.

<sup>134</sup> PG 46, col. 740 AB.

<sup>135</sup> On dust as an intermediary substance see Holl, *op. cit.* (above, n. 73), 397.

<sup>136</sup> *Op. cit.*, 346.

<sup>137</sup> See above, nn. 36 (Memphis); 37 (Jerusalem tapestry); 42 and 51 (Camuliana); 61 and 64 (Lydda); 65 and 91 (Edessa); 75 (Column of the Flagellation).

<sup>138</sup> See above nn. 35 (Praetorium of Pilate); 84 (Theodore of Sykeon); 89 (St. Artemius); 93 (St. Anastasius the Persian). A particularly striking example of an association of image and

finally, images which had originated with, and perhaps been blessed by, a saint still living, such as a stylite.<sup>139</sup> For these latter a specially prominent role in the development of the cult of images has been claimed by Holl,<sup>140</sup> and it is certainly true that the first recorded instance we have of a Christian image being put to apotropaic use concerns portraits of a stylite.<sup>141</sup> It is also striking to find that the palladia carried in battle are very often *acheiropoietai*. On the other hand, Prof. Grabar has also pointed out that it would be wrong to search in every early instance of the cult of images for some sort of association with the cult of relics.<sup>142</sup> He has laid great stress on the innate suggestive power possessed by the image as such (even when it claims to be nothing more than an ordinary man-made artefact and is not associated with any sacred person or object), a power to whose influence the Greeks and hellenized Semites in the Eastern Mediterranean were particularly susceptible. Among the broad masses the concept that divine forces were present in religious images was deeply rooted in the pagan past. Neoplatonism had merely provided a philosophical foundation for beliefs going back to

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relic is afforded by the Coptic Encomium of St. Menas, in which the following story is told by way of reconciling the presence of the Saint's body in Egypt with his martyrdom in Phrygia: The commander of a Phrygian regiment, who had taken the body of the Saint from its original resting place in Phrygia to serve as a palladium during a military expedition to Libya, found himself unable to move the sacred relics from their chosen abode in the Maryut. He therefore had an image of the Saint painted on a wooden tablet and he "placed the image on the Saint's remains for his blessing and power to remain in the image that he might take it with him to be a succour to him not only at sea but wherever he went, as an invincible weapon." Here the image clearly serves as a substitute for the relics and is purposely put in direct contact with them, in the manner of a *brandeum*, in order to endow it with magic power, although, with a slight break in logic, the writer then proceeds to tell us that the commander left the image on the Saint's remains and took with him another "like the first" (Drescher, *Apa Mena*, 140 ff.). The story is repeated – without bringing in an additional copy – in the Ethiopic version of the Passion of St. Menas (C. M. Kaufmann, *Ikonographie der Menas-Ampullen* [Cairo, 1910] 42 f.; E. A. W. Budge, *Texts relating to Saint Mena of Egypt and Canons of Nicaea in a Nubian Dialect* [London, 1909] 54 ff.). The legend may well be a product of the period when images began to acquire a status equal to that of relics and were increasingly used as military palladia. But the only safe chronological clues are "after 640" and "before 892/3" (Drescher, *op. cit.*, 127).

<sup>139</sup> See above n. 88 (Abbot Theodore) and, for the stylites, below, p. 118 with nn. 143 f.

<sup>140</sup> *Op. cit.* (above, n. 73).

<sup>141</sup> See above, n. 32 (Theodoretus). It must be remembered, however, that this practice is recorded for Rome and that Westerners may have acted with greater ingenuousness in this matter (see also above, p. 94, for Rufinus' version of the Paneas story). Holl perhaps was inclined to overemphasize the specific role of Syria, and of the stylites in particular, in promoting magic practices. His other instances are taken from the Life of the Younger St. Symeon (*op. cit.*, p. 390 f., nos. 3b and 3c; cf. below, n. 144); by the time this text was written miraculous powers were being claimed for all kinds of other images, including some which had no special associations, as will be seen presently. For a critical review of Holl's paper see H. Delehaye in *Analecta Bollandiana*, 27 (1908) 443 ff.

<sup>142</sup> *Op. cit.*, 348 ff.



much more ancient times. This deep-seated animistic attitude naturally re-asserted itself vis-à-vis the Christian religious image regardless of whether it had any special association with a relic, and long before it in turn became a subject of profound philosophical speculation.

In many of the examples of the incipient cult of images which we have been able to quote the connection with a holy person or a sacred object is at best a very tenuous one. For instance, the statue of Christ at Paneas, though considered to have been made in the Savior's life-time, had no direct association with Him. It was said to have been erected in gratitude by the Haemorrhissa after she had been cured. When miraculous powers were ascribed to this image, as was done as early as A.D. 400, it cannot be said that these powers were thought to derive from any direct contact with Christ. The images of St. Symeon the Elder used as apotropaia in Rome may have been *εὐλογίαι* brought back from visits to the Saint himself, as Holl suggests,<sup>143</sup> but in the case of miracles ascribed to images of St. Symeon the Younger there is no evidence that these images had at any time been in contact with the Saint.<sup>144</sup> The miracle story related in the Life of John the Faster specifically deprecates the idea that an *εὐλογία* by a living person, however holy, could impart miraculous power to an image and, in effect, the legend extols the magic efficacy of an ordinary icon with no special antecedents.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, by the end of the sixth century other miraculous tales were in circulation which involved quite ordinary pictures,<sup>146</sup> and their number increased during the seventh.<sup>147</sup> Images placed as apotropaia on city walls and public gates were rarely claimed as being of any special nature; nevertheless many of them were believed to possess magic powers.<sup>148</sup>

Thus the cult of images, though clearly prepared and encouraged by the

<sup>143</sup> *Op. cit.*, 391.

<sup>144</sup> It is true that in connection with St. Symeon the Younger we hear of portraits of the Saint brought back from visits to him as *εὐλογίαι* (cf. Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 390, no. 3a). But in the two instances in his Life in which images play a part in miracles these images are described as having been put up in gratitude by persons after they had returned home from successful visits to the Saint. There is no indication that these portraits should be thought of as having been blessed or even seen or touched by him; for these miracles see above, pp. 101 f., 109.

<sup>145</sup> See above, pp. 108 f.

<sup>146</sup> See above, nn. 56, 58 (Gregory of Tours).

<sup>147</sup> See above nn. 38 (Joannes Moschus); 57 (do.); 59 (Anastasius Sinaita); 62 (Arculf); 85 (Theodore of Sykeon); 86 (Sophronius); 92 (do.). Admittedly the seventh century date of the texts attributed to John Moschus and Sophronius is not entirely certain. Other examples are Miracles nos. 13 and 15 of Sts. Cosmas and Damian (above, n. 89) and the Beirut legend and its Coptic derivative (above, n. 59), but, as we have seen, none of these can be safely assumed to be pre-Iconoclastic.

<sup>148</sup> See above nn. 86 (Tetrapylon of Alexandria); 57 and 105 (Cherubim at Antioch); 63 (Chalke at Constantinople). The battle incidents referred to above in nn. 108, 112, 115 also involve ordinary images.

cult of relics, was never entirely dependent on it and, in the course of the seventh century, emancipated itself almost completely. Certain forms which the cult took offer particularly striking evidence of this emancipation. We have seen that images were apt to serve as *brandea*, that is to say, as intermediaries between holy persons or objects and their votaries. But we have also seen that images – and sometimes even quite ordinary images which did not themselves possess the character of a relic or *brandeum* – were credited in their turn with producing miraculous effects through some intermediary substance, in a manner traditional in the cult of relics.<sup>149</sup> In other words, the image assumes a status analogous to that of a relic. The parallelism is especially evident in cases where oil is given the role of intermediary.<sup>150</sup> Oil had long been treasured by the faithful as a link with holy sites or relics, witness the pilgrims' flasks which have survived to this day. A story about a miracle wrought by Sts. Cyrus and John, already referred to in an earlier note, expressly features oil taken from a lamp at a relic shrine and from a lamp burning before an image of Christ as agents of equivalent power.<sup>151</sup>

When we recall the words of Gregory of Nyssa the development of the cult of images as an increasingly independent form of devotion is hardly surprising. What is more difficult to explain is the reason why the cult of images received such a tremendous impetus at that particular time.

To probe into the causes of a movement so deeply rooted in ancient beliefs and practices and so obviously carried by broad masses of common people is a difficult undertaking. No doubt the inclination to worship and to make magic use of religious images began to operate as soon as such images started to be created<sup>152</sup> and was on the increase steadily from that time on. The momentum of this groundswell appears to have increased in the second half of the sixth century, but what the causes of this increase were is almost impossible to say. We have spoken of a growing quest for the palpable presence and intervention of the deity.<sup>153</sup> This perhaps stemmed from a growing sense of insecurity which may well have seized large sections of the population of the Eastern Mediterranean countries during those perilous times. But to try to identify with any precision the forces which seem to have pressed

<sup>149</sup> See above, pp. 104 ff. For the role of intermediary substances and objects in the cult of relics see F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, II, 1, cols. 1132 ff., s.v. "Brandium"; XIV, 2, cols. 2313 ff., s.v. "Reliques et Reliquaires"; also above, p. 116 (dust as an intermediary substance).

<sup>150</sup> See above, nn. 86, 87.

<sup>151</sup> See above, n. 86; note, however, that this text may not be a single unified composition and that the analogous roles assigned to oil from the two locations may be due to an after-thought.

<sup>152</sup> Holl, *op. cit.*, 388.

<sup>153</sup> See above, pp. 103 f.

from below could only be guesswork. What can be suggested, however, is that the resistance to such pressures on the part of the authorities decreased notably in that period, and that this relaxation of counterpressure from above was at least a major factor in the development. The historian, at any rate, is almost compelled to confine his search for causes to possible contributing factors in the official sphere, where the sources permit a certain amount of scrutiny.

So far as the clergy was concerned, the adaptation of Neoplatonic philosophy to Christian needs, which had been effected towards the end of the fifth century in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, provided a theoretical basis on which to build up a defense of Christian image worship. We shall see later that ecclesiastical authorities were not slow in availing themselves of this convenient and respectable source to allay their own scruples in the matter.<sup>154</sup> They also became increasingly aware of the usefulness of icons in the fight against heretics, and this seems to have been one of the reasons for the official blessing and sponsorship accorded particularly to the acheiropoietai, whose christological aspects will be mentioned later.<sup>155</sup> Dobschuetz<sup>156</sup> and Runciman<sup>157</sup> have suggested that the image of Edessa may have been "invented" during the siege of 544 by the Greeks and Chalcedonians in the city in opposition to, or for the benefit of, the powerful monophysite element then under the leadership of the famous Jacob Bar Adai. It is certainly true that monophysites often tended towards iconoclasm,<sup>158</sup> but, on the other hand, as Dobschuetz himself points out,<sup>159</sup> the monophysites at Edessa were not loath to claim the image for themselves, though they may not have accepted the story of its miraculous origin.<sup>160</sup> There is more solid evidence of the use of icons for dogmatic purposes in connection with the image of Camuliana. George Pisides extols it as tangible proof of the Incarnation and as a means of confounding the phantasiasts,<sup>161</sup> and in Pseudo-Gregory's sermon on this image, also of the seventh century according to

<sup>154</sup> See below, p. 138, on Hypatius of Ephesos. Cf. also Holl's excellent remarks on the role of theology in the development of the cult of images (*op. cit.*, 389).

<sup>155</sup> See below, pp. 143 f.

<sup>156</sup> *Op. cit.*, 119 f.

<sup>157</sup> *Op. cit.* (above, n. 67), 242 ff.

<sup>158</sup> See below, p. 131 (Philoxenos).

<sup>159</sup> *Op. cit.*, 141 f.

<sup>160</sup> Dobschuetz finds some slight support for his "Chalcedonian" thesis in the fact that later orthodox legend ascribed the discovery of the icon to a bishop with the Greek name Eulalios, a personage not otherwise known (*op. cit.*, 119, 64\*\* f.). This name, incidentally, occurs already in the version of the legend given by the oriental patriarchs in their letter to Emperor Theophilus (Duchesne, *op. cit.* — above, n. 100 — p. 280), though not in Combefis' text of that letter, which was used by Dobschuetz (*op. cit.*, 68\*\*).

<sup>161</sup> *De expeditione persica*, I, 145 ff. (Bonn ed., 9).

Dobschuetz, its miraculous appearance and effects are described and interpreted consistently as a re-enactment of Christ's Incarnation.<sup>162</sup> The most conspicuous example of active promotion of images for doctrinal reasons is the Eighty-Second Canon passed by the Quinisext Council at Constantinople in A.D. 692. The Canon concerned one specific type of representations, namely, the symbolic rendering of Christ in the form of a lamb, and prescribed that this should be replaced by representations of Christ in human form, "so that we may perceive through it the depth of the humiliation of God the Word and be led to the remembrance of His life in the flesh, His Passion and His death, and of the redemption which it brought to the world." Here the making of images — and specifically of anthropomorphic images — is officially prescribed by the highest authority. The purpose is clearly stated: The image is to make palpable the Incarnation of the Logos in Christ. It is used as a gauntlet, as a challenge to those whose christological views were not in agreement with orthodox dogma. There is no other text of the pre-Iconoclastic period which shows with equal clarity the authorities themselves taking the initiative in the matter of graven images, though nothing is said on the question of their worship.<sup>163</sup>

There were instances, then, when theoretical, and particularly theological and doctrinal, considerations served not only to defend images and their cult but also to promote them. But theology cannot be considered as being more than a contributing cause of the expanding cult of images. Had it been a primary cause one might well expect that expansion to have taken place in the fifth and early sixth centuries when the struggle with monophysitism was at its height and the need to demonstrate the reality of the Incarnation was particularly great. One would also expect opposition and defense called forth by the expanding cult of images in the second half of the sixth century to be centered much more clearly on theological and particularly christological issues than they actually were. As we shall see later, christology did play a part in both — and had done so already at a much earlier date — but neither was as yet focussed on it. Still less could it be maintained that the image was as yet a vital part of doctrinal strife. The areas of theology and image cult overlapped, but it was only in the course of the Iconoclastic controversy that they were made to coincide.

Perhaps the official promotion of the cult of religious images in the second half of the sixth century owed at least as much to secular developments involving the Byzantine court as it did to theological considerations. To appreciate the possible importance of the cult to the court it is necessary to recall

<sup>162</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 55 ff., 12\* ff.

<sup>163</sup> Mansi, XI, cols. 977 E–980 B.

what was stated on an earlier page in regard to imperial images and their continued use and veneration in Christian times.<sup>164</sup> The portraits of the rulers were hardly affected by the official Christian aversion to any form of idolatry. Their continued veneration was freely admitted as early as the fourth century. It is true that, as a rule, sacrifices were no longer offered to them,<sup>165</sup> but in every other respect they continued to enjoy a prominent and important role in the *culte imperial*. They were carried in solemn procession and received acclamations and *proskynesis*.<sup>166</sup> Candles and incense figure in this cult long before such paraphernalia can be found in use in connection with religious images.<sup>167</sup> These external features are expressions of a clearly recognized and precisely defined function of the imperial portrait, whose official status, unlike that of Christian religious imagery, was assured from the start. The imperial image, had, in fact, a specific constitutional and legal role which had been laid down in Roman times and was not affected by the advent of Christianity. For Christian as for pagan emperors their own portraits served to represent them wherever they were unable to be present in person. They were sent to distant provinces, to co-rulers and subordinates to receive obeisance on behalf of a new sovereign, and their acceptance or refusal meant acceptance or rejection of the sovereign himself.<sup>168</sup> In the law courts, market places, assembly rooms and theatres they served to represent the sacred person of the absent emperor,<sup>169</sup> and to confirm the magistrates' acts.<sup>170</sup> They had their definite role among the insignia of the army<sup>171</sup> and in the complicated protocol of imperial appointments and administration in general.<sup>172</sup> Most striking of all, perhaps, was their recognized function as legal protectors of the individual citizen. *Ad statuas confugere* was a tradi-

<sup>164</sup> See above, pp. 90 ff.

<sup>165</sup> See, however, above, pp. 91 f. and n. 23.

<sup>166</sup> See above, pp. 90 f., with n. 17, and the texts quoted by Kruse, *op. cit.* (above, n. 18), p. 35, n. 2 (attributed to St. John Chrysostom) and p. 36, n. 1 (probably from Severianus of Gabala: cf. Der Nersessian, *op. cit.* — above, n. 1 — p. 61); Setton, *op. cit.* (above, n. 18), 200.

<sup>167</sup> See above, pp. 91 f., with n. 23. For pictorial illustrations of this practice see H. Omont's edition of the *Notitia Dignitatum* (Paris, Ms. lat. 9661, published by the Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits, Paris, n.d.), pls. 17, 62 (cf. Kruse, *op. cit.*, 100).

<sup>168</sup> Kruse, *op. cit.*, 23 ff.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 79 f.

<sup>170</sup> ἵνα βεβαιῶται τὰ γινόμενα; cf. Severianus of Gabala, *De mundi creatione oratio* VI, 5 (PG 56, col. 489; quoted by Kruse, *op. cit.*, p. 79, n. 3). Severianus uses the same expression which the author of the Acts of Maximus Confessor was to use 250 years later to describe the function of the icons of Christ and the Virgin in confirming the agreement of the disputing clerics at Bezya (see above, p. 99 with n. 49). There seems to be no evidence, however, of an actual oath being taken on an imperial image.

<sup>171</sup> Kruse, *op. cit.*, 64 ff.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 89 ff. Cf. also the summary given by A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Paris, 1936) 4 ff.



tional right of any person seeking the protection of imperial law,<sup>173</sup> a right that was clearly circumscribed but not eliminated in the codifications of Theodosius<sup>174</sup> and Justinian.<sup>175</sup> The Church did not reject this legal usage; witness a passage ascribed to St. John Chrysostom and quoted subsequently by other writers.<sup>176</sup>

Clearly, then, there was an old-established and never seriously challenged tradition which accorded to the imperial portrait an importance and vicarious power, such as could hardly be granted to religious images without arousing scruples and opposition. It is true that this power was based on a premise which did not apply in the religious sphere: Unlike the Deity the ruler could not be omnipresent and his not being present in person was, so to speak, the condition for according so much power and such great honors to his portraits.<sup>177</sup> In any case, however, this meant a considerable blurring of the line of demarcation between image and prototype.<sup>178</sup> As is always the case when images are used to make palpable the authority or power of the person portrayed, the role legally assigned to the imperial portrait, particularly in connection with the right of asylum, fell little short of magic. There is at least one instance of a miracle ascribed to an imperial statue, a story told by Joshua the Stylite as having taken place at Edessa in the year 496: After the population of the city had celebrated the end of a drought with an outburst of frolics unworthy of Christians, divine disapproval was expressed through the intermediary of a statue of the Emperor Constantine, which for a period of three days let go of the cross it held in its hand.<sup>179</sup> Time and place are suggestive; less than half a century later the same city was said to have been the scene of a spectacular miracle operated by an image of Christ.

Belief in the magic power of images — this should be stressed once more — was never far from the surface in the Greek world. The court was not a prime mover in the matter. We have already seen that throughout the critical period private practice was ahead of official practice. But the least one must

<sup>173</sup> *Reallexikon fuer Antike und Christentum*, edited by Th. Klauser, fasc. 6 (Leipzig, 1943) col. 839 f. (s.v. *Asylrecht*).

<sup>174</sup> *Cod. Theod.*, 9, 44, 1.

<sup>175</sup> *Cod. Iust.*, I, 25, 1. *Dig.* 47, 10, 38; 48, 19, 28, 7.

<sup>176</sup> Treatise ascribed to Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh (Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 60); John of Damascus, *Sacra Parallela* (PG 96, col. 17 A).

<sup>177</sup> Cf. the passage from Severianus of Gabala referred to above, n. 170; also a quotation from Anastasius, Patriarch of Antioch in the late sixth century, cited by John of Damascus (PG 94, cols. 1316 CD, 1412 B) and at the Council of 787 (Mansi XIII, col. 56 E). The same thought occurs in Jewish and Early Christian literature as an explanation of the origin of idolatry; cf. E. Bevan, *Holy Images* (London, 1940) 68 f.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Alfoeldi, *op. cit.* (above, n. 18) 70 f.

<sup>179</sup> P. Martin, *Chronique de Josué le Stylite écrite vers l'an 515* (Leipzig, 1876) p. XXVI; Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 177\*.

admit is that when the vogue of image worship surged up in the Eastern Church with unprecedented force in the second half of the sixth century the emperors made no attempt to check what was in effect an infringement of a domain of ritual hitherto reserved to them. The fact that the religious image was growing into a role analogous to the traditional role of the imperial portrait did not escape the notice of contemporaries. A most interesting illustration of this is the previously mentioned account of a series of ceremonial processions in the years between 554 and 560, in which a copy of the image of Camuliana was paraded through various cities. The anonymous Syriac chronicler, who finished his work in 569, described these processions in terms of an emperor's *adventus* and interpreted them as a symbol of Christ's Second Advent.<sup>180</sup> It seems that at one point he even referred to the image of Christ as a *λαυράτον*, which is a technical term for the portrait of the ruler.<sup>180a</sup> Not very much later, writers began to defend the worship of images of Christ and the Virgin – and to denounce lack of respect towards such images – by arguing *a fortiori* from the laws and customs governing the worship of the portrait of the basileus.<sup>181</sup> The argument was to be repeated more than once in the course of the Iconoclastic controversy,<sup>182</sup> when it was supplemented by other statements implying or defining connections between the cults of

<sup>180</sup> See above, pp. 99 f.

<sup>180a</sup> The word in question was read as a Syriac form of the Greek *λαυράτον* by Hamilton and Brooks, *op. cit.* (above, n. 51), p. 321 and n. 10. Other editors of the text have interpreted the word differently – Noeldeke, whose version was used by Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, p. 7<sup>oo</sup>, n. 3, read *ἐορτή* (with a question mark), while Ahrens and Krueger, *op. cit.* (above, n. 51), 248, 393, proposed *ὁπατής* –, but the reading of Hamilton and Brooks seems to be the most acceptable. Mr. C. Moss of the Department of Oriental Manuscripts of the British Museum, who was kind enough to look up the original text in Add. Ms. 17202, informs me that palaeographically the disputed word presents no difficulty. The question is merely whether the letter *lamed* at the beginning is part of the root or whether it is a preposition. Since the word is coordinated with the immediately preceding one, which is without a preposition, Mr. Moss concludes that the *lamed* is likely to be part of the root and he therefore is inclined to accept Brooks' reading. I am most grateful to Mr. Moss for giving me the benefit of his expert knowledge in this matter. For *λαυράτον* as a term for the image of the ruler see Kruse, *op. cit.*, 47 ff.

<sup>181</sup> St. Symeon the Younger, *Letter to Justin II* (Mansi, XIII, col. 161 AB; see also below, p. 130). Treatise ascribed to Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh (Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 61); this writer makes his point in the form of a quotation from Severianus of Gabala. But John of Damascus' fuller version of this passage (PG 94, col. 1408 f.) makes it clear that Severianus had spoken of the honor paid to the imperial image as a precedent not for the worship of images of Christ but for the worship of the cross. The passage lent itself to such misuse because Severianus, for the purpose of his analogy, had described the cross as *ἀθανάτον βασιλέως εἰκόν*. It is one of the numerous instances of a literal use being made by defenders of image worship in the seventh and eighth centuries of patristic passages in which the term *εἰκόν* had been intended figuratively.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. John of Damascus' use of the passage from Severianus (see preceding footnote), and his own direct statement to the same effect (PG 94, col. 1357 AB). Cf. also Nicephoros (PG 100, col. 485 AB).

religious and imperial images.<sup>183</sup> One of the most interesting statements of this kind occurs in a previously quoted, but, unfortunately, not precisely datable, sermon by a Coptic preacher, who bases the argumentation *a fortiori* specifically on the protective power of the imperial image: "For if the image of the Emperor of this world, when painted and set up in the midst of the marketplace, becoming a protection to the whole city, and if violence is committed against any one, and he goeth and taketh hold of the image of the Emperor: *then* no man will be able to oppose him, even though the Emperor is *naught but* a mortal man; and he is taken to a court of law. Let us, therefore, my beloved, honor the eikon of our Lady the veritable Queen, the holy Theotokos Mary . . . etc."<sup>184</sup>

We conclude that the position and function which religious images were acquiring in the second half of the sixth century, were understood from the outset – and, as time went on, increasingly – to be analogous to those enjoyed all along by the imperial image. This course of events would have been impossible without the acquiescence of the emperors themselves. Indeed, it must have had their active support. There is perhaps a slight indication of this already in the Syriac chronicle of 569, when it is said that the processions in which Christ's image was "royally" paraded were organized by the priests on the advice of somebody in the entourage of the Emperor Justinian himself.<sup>185</sup> According to the chronicler this happened in the year 554, the twenty-seventh of Justinian's reign. Thus, if we take the story at face value, official encouragement of an "imperial" ritual involving an icon of Christ must have been forthcoming already during that Emperor's final years. In the time of his immediate successors the evidence becomes unmistakable. Whether the image of Camuliana was brought to Constantinople under imperial auspices we cannot say. Cedrenus, our only authority for this *translatio*, simply says the image "came" from Cappadocia in the seventh year of the reign of Justin II.<sup>186</sup> But it certainly acquired an official status and function very soon. It was in this period that the Byzantine rulers and local authorities began to make public and official use in civic and military contexts of the protective and salutary properties of religious images which private devotion had ascribed to them for some time.<sup>187</sup> In view of the monopoly previously enjoyed in these contexts by the imperial image the development must be described as a voluntary surrender of a privilege on the

<sup>183</sup> P. Lucas Koch, "Christusbild-Kaiserbild," *Benediktinische Monatsschrift* (1939) 85 ff.; especially 88 ff., 103 f.

<sup>184</sup> Worrell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 45), 375.

<sup>185</sup> For references see above, n. 51.

<sup>186</sup> See above, n. 125.

<sup>187</sup> See above, pp. 109 ff.

part of the monarch. In the army the only images previously employed in Christian times in the manner of palladia were the imperial busts on the labarum and other military standards.<sup>188</sup> The image of Christ on the gate of the Chalke, if indeed it was first put up in this period,<sup>189</sup> took the place of the image of the Emperor Constantine previously placed over the entrance to the palace, according to the *Vita Constantini*.<sup>190</sup> Probably it was Tiberius II (578–82) who first placed his own throne in a position of palpable subordination to that of Christ by having an image of the enthroned Savior depicted in the apse of the Chrysotriklinium.<sup>191</sup> Tiberius II was also the first emperor to renounce the representation of his own enthroned image on coins — a type which had been in use under most of his predecessors — and this “majestas” representation suffered an almost complete eclipse from this time on until it was revived by the Iconoclasts.<sup>192</sup> But the most striking evidence of a new spirit was to come towards the end of the seventh century, when Justinian II revolutionized Byzantine coinage by placing on his coins an image of Christ. The legend “*Rex Regnantium*” makes it clear that Christ is proclaimed here not merely as ruler in general but specifically as the ruler of those who rule on earth. Justinian II made his point even more explicit in those issues which bear on the opposite side his own full length figure (standing, to demonstrate his reverence before the Higher Ruler) with the inscription “*Servus Christi*.” The emperor emphasizes before all the world his subordinate position in relation to Christ.<sup>193</sup>

A new mood, a new attitude, seems to have obtained among at least some of these rulers of the late sixth and seventh centuries. There is an atmosphere of pietism which one may sense in the biography of a monarch such as Justin II,<sup>194</sup> and which contrasts sharply with the self-confident autocratic pose of the Great Justinian. It is from such premises that the emperors’

<sup>188</sup> Kruse, *op. cit.*, 64 ff.

<sup>189</sup> See above, n. 63.

<sup>190</sup> Book III, 3 (*Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, VII: Eusebius Werke, I*, edited by I. A. Heikel [Leipzig, 1902] 78).

<sup>191</sup> We know of this image only from post-Iconoclastic sources, which refer to a new decoration of the room by Michael III, but one of these sources says explicitly that “Christ pictured again shines above the imperial throne” (*Greek Anthology*, I, 106; Loeb ed., I, 46). Since the room received its first decoration under Tiberius II (Leo Grammaticus, *Chronographia*, Bonn ed., 137 f.) it is not unreasonable to assume that this decoration already comprised an image of Christ in the apse. Cf. S. Der Nersessian, “Le décor des églises du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Actes du VI<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d’Etudes Byzantines*, II (Paris, 1951) 315 ff., especially 320.

<sup>192</sup> Grabar, *op. cit.* (above, n. 172), 24 f.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. especially “Type 2” in W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*, II (London, 1908) 331 ff. and pl. XXXVIII, nos. 15, 16, 20, 21, 24; pl. XXXIX, no. 3. Grabar, *op. cit.*, 164 ff.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. particularly Cedrenus, Bonn ed., I, 680 ff.

conscious policy of boosting an official cult of religious images at the expense of their own previous monopoly seems to have sprung.<sup>195</sup>

When one tries to fathom the reasons for this change of mood in the Empire one is reduced largely to speculations. We have already mentioned the eschatological expectations which may have been attendant upon the end of the first paschal cycle in 562.<sup>196</sup> Prof. Grabar, who was the first to assemble the numismatic and related evidence indicating a profound spiritual change about that time, has suggested other and more durable and powerful factors, which may have exerted an influence more specifically upon the imperial administration itself and may have transformed its concepts of its own role and function.<sup>197</sup> This was, after all, the period of the great retrenchment during which the Emperor ceased to be *de facto* master of the *oikumene*. Was it not perhaps natural that under these circumstances the theme of universal power, which lay at the very center of Byzantine political thinking from first to last, should be embodied less frequently and palpably in the person of the earthly ruler, to be re-emphasized all the more strongly on a level where it was not dependent on the vagaries of military and diplomatic fortunes? Of course, imperial power in Byzantium had from the very beginning been conceived as derived from Heaven. The emperor was the Vicar of Christ, his earthly representative. It could not be maintained for a moment that this was a new concept in the late sixth century. What may be

<sup>195</sup> Perhaps this meant an altogether more abundant use of religious representations than Justinian — for whatever reason — had been willing to provide for his churches. One should certainly examine in the light of what has been said above the statement which Theophanes placed at the very beginning of his account of Justin II and his reign: "Being a pious man he adorned the churches built by Justinian; the Great Church that of the Apostles, and other churches and monasteries" (Bonn ed., I, 373). This sounds like a change of policy rather than like a simple completion of a task left unfinished by his predecessor, as Heisenberg suggested ("Die alten Mosaiken der Apostelkirche und der Hagia Sophia," in *Ἑβραία, Hommage internationale à l'Université Nationale de Grèce à l'occasion du soixante-quinzième anniversaire de sa fondation* [Athens, 1912] 121 ff., especially 140, 145). It is true that Theophanes does not explicitly speak of figure representations, but at least in the case of St. Sophia we know that there had been such representations prior to the Iconoclastic period, since the post-Iconoclastic emperors described their work as a renewal (S. G. Mercati, "Sulle iscrizioni di Santa Sofia," *Bessarione*, XXVI [1922] 200 ff., especially 204 f.). As in the case of the Chrysotriklinium (above, n. 191) it is reasonable to ascribe the original work to a ruler who is actually recorded as having provided decoration for the building. Thus a case can be made for Justin II without utilizing the poem of Corippus and other somewhat ambiguous texts adduced by Heisenberg. But the problem of the first figure decorations of St. Sophia and of the Church of the Holy Apostles is very complex and cannot be solved merely by means of a reference to a general trend of enthusiastic and aggressive "iconophilia" under Justinian's successors. Cf. also Der Nersessian, *loc. cit.* (above, n. 191).

<sup>196</sup> See above, p. 100 and n. 54.

<sup>197</sup> *L'empereur*, 163 ff. For an excellent summary of the general significance of this period, which inaugurated what may be properly called the medieval phase of Byzantine history, see G. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1952) 65 ff.



suggested, however, is that there was perhaps within this concept, which implied both supreme power on earth and subordination to a still higher power in Heaven, a subtle change of emphasis from the former to the latter. Granted even that there was a shift of this kind, it could not have produced by itself the vogue of worship of religious images with which we are dealing. But it may well have been a reason for official encouragement of this trend.

Considerations of this order were introduced by Prof. Grabar in order to explain, not the increased devotion to religious images in the late sixth century, but their subsequent radical elimination by the Iconoclastic emperors. He suggested, in fact, — and the idea was then elaborated by L. Koch and G. Ladner — that the outbreak of Iconoclasm was in essence a re-assertion of imperial power and an affirmation of its absolute superiority vis-à-vis the Church.<sup>198</sup> This explanation of Byzantine Iconoclasm perhaps had a particular appeal for scholars living and working under the impact of European experiences in the years before the Second World War, just as earlier interpretations of that highly complex and many-faceted movement were influenced by contemporary events.<sup>199</sup> But it certainly has thrown into high relief an essential aspect of Iconoclasm. Though the emperors of that era did not cease to consider themselves as vicegerents of Christ, and carried out their policies in that capacity, they did emphasize with new vigor the absolute power of the monarch on earth, witness the various manifestations of absolutism in the imperial iconography of that period.<sup>200</sup> The thesis outlined in the foregoing pages is a logical complement to that of Prof. Grabar, and, indeed, its almost indispensable presupposition. If re-assertion of the absoluteness of the monarch's authority on earth did figure as a central issue in Iconoclasm it could do so only because the emperors of the preceding era had promoted the worship of religious images as a means of emphasizing their own subordination to a transcendental power. Though considerations of this nature may not have been prime movers in the matter either in the eighth century or in the sixth, they may have served both times to encourage the emperor to give focus and direction to strong existing trends.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>198</sup> Grabar, *L'empereur*, 169 f. P. Lucas Koch, *op. cit.* (above, n. 183). G. B. Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," *Mediaeval Studies* (published by the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto), II (1940) 127 ff., especially 133 ff.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Ladner's references (*op. cit.*, 133, 136) to "anachronistic" interpretations of Byzantine Iconoclasm in terms of nineteenth century rationalism and sixteenth century protestantism, and his own allusions (*ibid.*, 138, 140) to contemporary events.

<sup>200</sup> Grabar, *op. cit.*, 166 ff.

<sup>201</sup> For a criticism of this approach to Iconoclasm, particularly with reference to Prof. Ladner's paper, see M. V. Anastos, "Church and State during the First Iconoclastic Contro-

## IV. OPPOSITION

Throughout the Early Christian and early Byzantine period moves in the direction of image worship always engendered opposition. The vogue which we have been studying, unprecedented in scope and intensity, also produced resistance on an unprecedented scale.

The full reaction came with the Iconoclastic crisis of the eighth century. The two movements are interrelated not only in the exalted but crucial sphere of imperial policy, which has just been referred to, but also on the humbler level which provided the fuel for the official campaigns. The Isaurian emperors could not have made of the religious icon a central issue but for the vastly increased practice of image worship in the preceding generations and the opposition this development had provoked, if only in certain specified quarters.

The Iconoclastic movement itself, and the elaborate theoretical defense of image worship which resulted from it, are outside the scope of this paper. But both opposition and defense were aroused long before the issue was joined in the reign of Leo III. Compared with the great explosion which ensued these were little more than preliminary rumblings. But, sporadic as it was, the existence of such opposition is much more in evidence in the latter half of the sixth and in the seventh century than during the preceding period, and thus provides a measure of the increased importance the icon had acquired.

Demonstrations of hostility may be divided into two categories: Those that came from within the fold and those for which non-Christians were responsible. The latter constitute an altogether new phenomenon not recorded in any source prior to the second half of the sixth century. We have already mentioned the miracle stories of the post-Justinianic era which describe attacks on, or desecrations of, sacred images by infidels, particularly Saracens or, more frequently, Jews.<sup>202</sup> Since at precisely this period defense of

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versy," to be published in *Ricerche Religiose*. By stressing the legitimacy of Byzantine absolutism Prof. Anastos, who kindly permitted me to read his study in manuscript, does not in effect rule out the possibility of temporary changes of emphasis *within* the concept of the emperor as a vicegerent of Christ, as proposed above. While writing this chapter I received word from Prof. Grabar, to whom I had submitted some of the main results of the present study in a letter, that he is at present working on exactly similar lines, in preparation of a monograph on Iconoclasm. Though he still maintains the derivation of the worship of religious images from the cult of relics, as he did in *Martyrium*, he, too, now attaches great importance to the precedent which the toleration of the cult of the ruler portrait by the Church had created, and to the voluntary action of Justinian's successors, who actively promoted the worship of images of Christ and the saints.

<sup>202</sup> See above, pp. 101 f. In the texts referred to in nn. 60 and 61 the attackers are described as infidels. The story of Anastasius Sinaita (n. 59) concerns an attack by Saracens. Jews figure in

icon worship also began to play a role in polemical writings against Jews,<sup>203</sup> it is probable that the physical attacks related in the miracle stories are not completely legendary, though terms such as “Jew” or “Infidel” may have been used rather loosely and freely by orthodox writers of edifying tales. Physical aggression may well have been a counterpart to the literary polemics which Jews evidently started at that time.<sup>204</sup> In addition we hear of attacks on Christian images by the Samaritans, witness a passionate, and apparently authentic, letter of St. Symeon the Younger to the Emperor Justin II.<sup>205</sup> There is also some evidence in the literature of this period that the last surviving elements of Graeco-Roman paganism may have been alert enough to realize, and strong enough to exploit, the apparent self-contradiction involved in the new attitude of the Church, an attitude which was in such striking contrast to the Early Christians’ denunciation of images and their worship.<sup>206</sup>

Saracens and Samaritans, Jews and pagans can hardly have been out to save Christians from idolatric excesses. Probably in most cases the attacks on images served as a simple and dramatic means of hurting Christians in what had evidently become a vital part of their religious life. In addition — and this applies particularly to literary polemics — opponents of Christianity

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the attacks related by Gregory of Tours (n. 58), and Arculf (n. 62), and in the Beirut legend and its Coptic derivative (n. 59).

<sup>203</sup> See below, p. 135.

<sup>204</sup> This raises an interesting and as yet unsolved problem concerning the time when the Jews themselves abandoned figure representations, and their reasons for doing so. According to J. B. Frey (“La question des images chez les Juifs à la lumière des récentes découvertes,” *Biblica*, XV [1934] 265 ff., especially 298) the Jews returned to a rigorous interpretation of the law against graven images during the late fifth and the sixth centuries. The chronological limits can be narrowed down somewhat — and perhaps considerably — on the evidence of a group of mosaic floors of Palestinian synagogues with representations of animate subjects; cf. M. Avi-Yonah, “Mosaic Pavements in Palestine,” *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, II (1933) 136 ff., 163 ff.; III (1934) 26 ff., 49 ff.: No. 22 (Beit Alfa); 69 (‘Ein Duk); 86 (El Hammeh); 345 (Esfa; see also *ibid.*, III [1934] 118 ff.). Leaving aside no. 86 (which seems to be unpublished), these mosaics form a coherent group, which, on the strength of the fact that an emperor named Justin is mentioned in one of the inscriptions of the floor at Beit Alfa, must be assigned to the sixth century. Sukenik (*The Ancient Synagogue of Beth Alpha* [Jerusalem and London, 1932] 57 f.) was inclined to identify the emperor of the inscription with Justin I (518–27), but he readily admitted the possibility that Justin II was meant, in which case animate subjects would still have been represented by Jews in the sixties and seventies of the sixth century. Their polemics against Christian idolatry started not long after this time. There was evidently a rather sudden return to rigorism on the part of the Jews. Could this have been caused by the spectacle of vastly increased image worship among the Christians, which the Jews could hope to exploit more effectively for polemic purposes if they themselves could claim to be strict observers of Biblical Law?

<sup>205</sup> PG 86 bis, cols. 3215 ff. Mansi, XIII, cols. 160 D–161 E. See Delehaye, *op. cit.* (above, n. 40), p. LXXV.

<sup>206</sup> Baynes, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), 96. Cf. below, p. 135.

could hardly have failed to take advantage of so vulnerable a spot in order to embarrass the church and, if possible, divide the ranks of the faithful. They put the clergy in a position of having to defend what must have been to many a questionable cause. Baynes has suggested that some of the apologies addressed to Jews were “indirectly intended to meet the scruples of Christians impressed by the Jewish contention.”<sup>207</sup> To arouse such scruples must have seemed a promising strategy, the more so since resistance within the Church to the departure from Early Christian ideals of spirituality had never entirely ceased.

It is this internal opposition which is of particular interest and importance. We have already mentioned voices of protest and warning raised as early as the fourth century.<sup>208</sup> In the fifth century there was opposition to religious imagery among the Monophysites. Philoxenos of Mabbug, one of their leaders, objected specifically – and quite logically – to images of Christ, but also to the representation of angels in anthropomorphic form and to renderings of the Holy Ghost in the shape of a dove.<sup>209</sup> Doves representing the Holy Ghost were said also to have attracted the wrath of Severus of Antioch.<sup>210</sup> While this opposition is rooted in heretical doctrine, doubts and scruples also arose among apparently quite orthodox clerics, who were simply worried about the Second Commandment. Such was the case of Julian of Atramytion, a cleric of the first half of the sixth century, who, in literal adherence to the word of Scripture, confined his opposition to sculpture.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>208</sup> See above, pp. 86, 92 f.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. excerpt from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Ioannes Diakrinomenos read at the Council of 787 (Mansi, XIII, cols. 180 E–181 B). For this extract see Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Zweite Reihe, V (Stuttgart, 1934) col. 1879 f., s.v. *Theodoros Anagnostes*. I owe this reference to Prof. P. J. Alexander, who also drew my attention to the fact that the reference to Philoxenos’ iconoclasm in the Chronicle of Theophanes (Bonn ed., I, 207) appears to be inexact. According to Theophanes Philoxenos objected to images of Christ and the *saints*, but this is probably a simple mistake caused by the word ἀγίων being read for ἀγγελων.

<sup>210</sup> Mansi, XIII, col. 184 A.

<sup>211</sup> See above, p. 94 with n. 33. Why Julian exempts sculptures on doors is difficult to say. Did he mean the main door of the church facing the street, where any abuse could be readily detected? In any case, the distinction made by Julian between paintings and sculpture is of great interest, in view of the preferred position which painting did in fact occupy throughout the history of Early Christian and Byzantine art. Sculpture – and especially sculpture in the round – was the idol *par excellence* against which Christian – and pre-Christian – opposition was directed from the start: Cf. particularly the references to the vileness of the sculptor’s materials, which is one of the common-places not only of Early Christian but also of Jewish and pagan polemics against pagan idolatry (for references see J. Geffcken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten* [Leipzig and Berlin, 1907] p. XXI, n. 1 and p. XXVI; *ibid.*, pp. 102, 146, 188 n. 3, 223, for the apologists’ use of Herodotus’ story of the footbath of Amasis. Cf. also J. Geffcken,

The developments of the second half of the sixth century must have added considerably to this uneasiness and, as Baynes suggests, in all probability the situation was skillfully and successfully exploited by outsiders. Direct evidence of increased opposition within the church as a result of the expansion of the cult of images comes from two widely disparate sources on the periphery of the Byzantine world.<sup>212</sup> By the end of the century the wave of idolatric worship had reached the West in sufficient strength to induce Bishop Serenus of Marseilles to destroy or remove the images which he saw being adored in his churches. His action called forth a rebuke from Pope Gregory, who clearly felt that the time had come to clarify once and for all the position of the Roman Church in the matter of religious images. The two letters he addressed to the Bishop of Marseilles<sup>213</sup> became indeed classical expressions of the Western attitude, opposed alike to complete elimination of images and to their worship.

It is striking that at exactly the same time iconoclastic troubles broke out at the other extreme of the Byzantine Empire. In the last decade of the sixth century, some rebellious priests in Armenia started to preach the destruction of images. We have their opponents' testimony to the effect that they found a large following. The issue was bound up with complicated political and religious conflicts which divided Armenia at that time. It flared

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"Der Bilderstreit des heidnischen Altertums," in *Archiv fuer Religionswissenschaft*, XIX [1916-19] 286 ff., especially 288 f.). For rabbinical writers objecting specifically to images in the round see Bevan, *Holy Images*, 53 f. On the other hand, when opposition to *Christian* art first became articulate it was directed exclusively against painting: Cf. Council of Elvira (above, n. 6); Eusebius' letter to the Empress Constantia (above, nn. 6, 28; see especially PG 20, col. 1545 C); Augustine (above, n. 25). The fragments ascribed to Epiphanius also show a constant and consistent preoccupation with painting; cf. Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.* (above, n. 28), pp. 67 ff., nos. 3, 5, 6, 14, 15, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 31 or Holl, *op. cit.* (above, n. 27), pp. 356 ff., nos. 1, 5, 12, 14, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 34. The reason was surely not that sculpture was considered more admissible, but, on the contrary, that it was altogether beyond the pale (cf. Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 377 and n. 5, and Bevan, *op. cit.*, 51 ff., with quotations from Epiphanius). Julian, in limiting his opposition to sculpture, was decidedly a moderate, and, in a sense, his attack was actually a shield for a defense of painted imagery. In the second half of the sixth century more radical opponents of religious images were to resume the attack on painting. They even adapted the old argument concerning the vileness of the sculptor's material so as to make it applicable to the painter's pigments: Cf. Der Nersessian, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), 68, 76.

<sup>212</sup> Ch. Diehl seems to have been the first to add to the two examples of sixth century iconoclasm which are about to be quoted a "veritable rebellion" against images at Antioch (*Manuel d'art byzantin* [Paris, 1910] 335; the same statement in the second edition, I [1925] 361). This rebellion has since acquired all the rights of an authenticated event in standard literature. Could it be an exaggerated reference to the raid by some infidels on an image of St. Symeon the Younger, which took place at Antioch according to the Saint's Life (above, n. 60)?

<sup>213</sup> PL 77, cols. 1027 f., 1128 f.



up once more in Caucasian Albania in the eighties of the seventh century.<sup>214</sup> Armenian Paulicianism, which also made its appearance about this time, was likewise opposed to images.<sup>215</sup>

There is, then, no century between the fourth and the eighth in which there is not some evidence of opposition to images even within the Church. The fact that opposition was at least latently present throughout this period is of great interest to the art historian. Not only during the earliest phase of Christian art, but even in the time of its apparently unrestricted expansion artists and their patrons had to reckon with potential hostility. The fact should be borne in mind when analyzing the religious imagery of this period.

The precise motivation of the opposition in each particular instance is not easy to determine. Originally, as we have seen, the issue was one of spirituality of worship, adherence to Old Testament law, and revulsion against the cult practices of the pagan masses. The stand taken by such men as Julian of Atramytion and Serenus of Marseilles in the sixth century seems to have been inspired by these considerations, and indicates an at least sporadic persistence of the original ideal. Already in the fourth century, however, theological arguments were injected into the discussion, arguments which had to do with the divine nature in Christ and the consequent impossibility to depict His likeness.<sup>216</sup> The selective iconoclasm of some of the monophysite leaders was clearly inspired by their theological, and particularly christological, views. Matters of doctrine may also have played a part in the opposition to images in Armenia. But asked in so many words why they would not accept the image of God Incarnate, the Armenian iconoclasts replied that images were foreign to the Commandments and that the worship of images was not prescribed in Holy Scripture.<sup>217</sup> They thus took their explicit stand on disciplinary rather than theological grounds. Their opponents in turn tried to convert them by quoting precedents, particularly from the Old Testament and from the writings of the Fathers, rather than through theological reasoning.<sup>218</sup> It was only in the course of the Iconoclastic controversy of the eighth century that the opposition to images was based firmly on doctrinal arguments.

<sup>214</sup> Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 70 ff. Prof. P. J. Alexander is preparing a paper on the political aspects of the conflict. The paper is to be published in a volume of studies in honor of Prof. A. M. Friend, Jr.

<sup>215</sup> Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 73 f.

<sup>216</sup> See above, nn. 28, 30 (Eusebius, Epiphanius).

<sup>217</sup> Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 72. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 85 ff., n. 131, on the question of the sectarian affiliations of these iconoclasts.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 58 ff., 72, 78.

The instances of effective opposition prior to the outbreak of the controversy are admittedly sporadic and, compared with the virulent attack that was to follow, relatively insignificant. It is perhaps surprising that after the great upsurge of icon worship in the late sixth century these hostile elements did not crystallize more swiftly, and that a really concentrated reaction did not take place until a century and a half later. We have already mentioned the role which imperial policy may have played in promoting and shielding the cult. That it was an imperial decision which finally reversed the trend is an established fact. It may well be that without such a decision the opposition would never have gained enough strength and impetus to become effective on a large scale. Why the reversal of the imperial position took place at that particular moment in history is a problem beyond the scope of the present study. One motivation that may have been of some importance has been mentioned above, when we spoke of an inclination to re-assert the absolute nature of imperial authority on earth.<sup>219</sup> It is doubtful, however, whether the adoption of iconoclasm as an official Byzantine policy in the third decade of the eighth century can be explained adequately without a push from outside. In this connection the famous Edict of Yezid certainly deserves close scrutiny. As described by John the Monk at the Council of 787, it does not sound like a crude anti-Christian demonstration, but like a shrewdly devised apple of discord which combined the drastic character of earlier physical attacks on images by non-Christians with the embarrassing effect of their literary polemics. For according to John it was a general measure directed against all representations of animate subjects, including those in purely secular contexts, and therefore it could not readily be dismissed as a simple act of hostility against the Christian religion.<sup>220</sup> It is quite possible, then, that this edict was peculiarly effective in arousing latent opposition among the Christians themselves in a way in which the frontal attacks previously made by outsiders had not done.

#### V. DEFENSE

Throughout the centuries defense of religious images was conditioned by attacks. It was in response to the iconoclastic onslaughts of the eighth and early ninth centuries that a definitive theory of religious images and their cult was worked out. But just as the massive attacks of that period had their antecedents in earlier centuries so had the defense. The intensity of the

<sup>219</sup> See above, p. 128.

<sup>220</sup> Mansi, XIII, cols. 197 A–200 B. In Creswell's translation (*Ars Islamica*, XI–XII [1946] 164) an important sentence (Mansi, XIII, col. 197 DE) is omitted. A new study of the Edict of Yezid was being prepared by Prof. A. A. Vasiliev during the last months of his life.

latter increased in the late sixth century, along with — and plainly as a result of — the acceleration and intensification of the former.

There was no really systematic attempt to establish a Christian theory of images prior to the sixth century.<sup>220a</sup> The frequently quoted remarks on the subject by authors such as Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Nilus were incidental to their descriptions or rhetorical praises of specific images or decorations.<sup>221</sup> They were not full-fledged apologies. The earliest known text which is dedicated entirely to this problem and attempts to deal with specific criticisms and objections is a letter written by Bishop Hypatius of Ephesos to his suffragan, Julian of Atramyction, in the first half of the sixth century.<sup>222</sup> It was followed in the late sixth and seventh centuries by apologies addressed to Jews,<sup>223</sup> to pagans (or, at least, answering arguments such as pagans might have used),<sup>224</sup> and to Christian heretics.<sup>225</sup> As we have seen, this period also witnessed the emergence of legends and stories involving images, many of which were undoubtedly written and propagated for apologetic purposes. In some miracle stories there is definite evidence that the writer was familiar with current defensive theory and used it, if not as a basis for his tale, at least to point up its moral. Such passages form a definite and important part of the body of theoretical writings on images during this period. Over and above such abstract statements the very plots of some of the stories are admirably poignant illustrations of certain theoretical concepts which were then in the making. These parallels should at least be pointed out, even in cases where it cannot be decided whether the story was invented and written with apologetic intent or was a spontaneous expression of intensified beliefs.

In analyzing the “case for the defense” the arguments based on biblical or historical precedent may be left aside. They are of minor interest compared with those which reveal the writer’s own attitude towards, and thoughts about, religious images. What we chiefly wish to know is whether

<sup>220a</sup> I am concerned only with statements which have to do with actual images. For the “image” as a theoretical concept in patristic literature see G. B. Ladner, “The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VII (1953) 1–34. Prof. Ladner traces the influence of this concept on the defense of religious images during Iconoclasm and touches only incidentally upon the defense of actual Christian images in pre-Iconoclastic times, which alone interests us here.

<sup>221</sup> See above, n. 7.

<sup>222</sup> See above, p. 94 with n. 33, p. 131 with n. 211, and below, p. 138.

<sup>223</sup> By Leontius of Neapolis (see below, pp. 140 f.) and others; cf. Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 79 ff. and Baynes, *op. cit.*, 97 ff.; *ibid.*, 103, the suggestion that some of these were really intended for the benefit of Christians.

<sup>224</sup> Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 82 (John of Salonika; homily ascribed to St. Symeon the Younger; Constantine Chartophylax). Cf. Baynes, *op. cit.*, 95 f.

<sup>225</sup> Treatise ascribed to Vrt’anes K’ert’ogh (Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 58 ff.).

the literary pronouncements made in defense of images during the period between Justinian I and Iconoclasm reflect in any way the profound changes in the function of religious imagery which took place at that time. Even though a systematic iconosophy was not evolved until later we may expect to find in the literature of this period signs of awareness of these changes and attempts to provide them with a theoretical foundation.

It may be well to anticipate one general conclusion to which this inquiry leads: The new functions of religious images have a theoretical counterpart in a number of attempts to justify such images not through their usefulness to, or meaning for, the beholder, but through their inner relationship to their prototypes. In a sense this result seems paradoxical. We have seen that the period under discussion witnessed a vast increase in the day-to-day use of icons. Image and beholder were brought into a closer and more intimate contact than ever before in Christian times. Yet it was not so much this relationship which the apologists attempted to defend and explore. On the contrary, they tried to lift the icon out of the sphere of human needs and demands altogether and to anchor it securely in a transcendental relationship to the Godhead. In actual fact this was, of course, the surest way to motivate and justify the increasing intensity of ritual practice.

In order to appreciate the new departure made by the defenders of Christian images it is necessary to cast a brief glance on the development of apologetic thought during the preceding centuries. The original Christian defense of the visual arts, initiated by the Cappadocian Fathers in the second half of the fourth century, was based on their usefulness as educational tools. Imagery was *γραφὴ σιωπῶσα*,<sup>226</sup> a means of instruction or edification, especially for the illiterate.<sup>227</sup> The stress may be either on intellectual nourishment<sup>228</sup> or on moral education.<sup>229</sup> It was on these purely pragmatic lines that Pope Gregory the Great was to take his stand two hundred years later in his letters to Bishop Serenus of Marseilles.<sup>230</sup> In the East it soon proved impossible to confine apologetic thought within such narrow limits. But although the functions assigned to the image became increasingly weighty, up to and including the era of Justinian, they were always defined in terms of what the image could do for the beholder.

<sup>226</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio laudatoria Sancti ac Magni Martyris Theodori* (PG 46, col. 757 D). Cf. also a similar expression used by a North African writer of the early fifth century (above, n. 25).

<sup>227</sup> The same argument had been used before by apologists of pagan image worship; cf. Ch. Clerc, *Les théories relatives au culte des images chez les auteurs grecs du II<sup>me</sup> siècle après J.-C.* (Paris, 1915) 234.

<sup>228</sup> Elliger, *op. cit.* (above, n. 5), 85 f. (Paulinus of Nola).

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 61 f. (Basil), 65 (Gregory of Nyssa), 77 f. (Nilus).

<sup>230</sup> See above, n. 213.

Perhaps the first departure from the purely didactic argument may be found in Gregory of Nyssa, who speaks of a picture of the Sacrifice of Isaac as a source of a deep emotional experience.<sup>231</sup> A more decisive step forward was taken when contemplation of an image was claimed not merely to benefit a beholder's religious education or stimulate his emotion, but to constitute some sort of channel enabling him to approach the Deity. This line of reasoning, in which the image becomes a means of visualizing the invisible or of conveying to it love or respect, had been elaborated in various forms by apologists of pagan image worship.<sup>232</sup> It was, as we have seen, a standard concept for defining the role of the ruler portrait, and in that sphere it was adopted by Christian writers as early as the fourth century.<sup>233</sup> In the first half of the fifth century it was applied to a religious image by Philostorgius. We have spoken previously of his account of the statue of Christ at Paneas, in which he describes what he considers the proper demeanor in front of a religious image.<sup>234</sup> The apologetic nature of his remarks is self-evident. He writes with an eye on critics inside or outside the Church when he deprecates all thought of worship or *proskynesis*, "since it is not permitted to prostrate oneself before bronze or other matter." Nevertheless he sees in a joyful approach and gaze on the image a way of demonstrating one's love for its archetype.<sup>235</sup> It is a somewhat colorless formula worked out at a time when practice was already going well beyond what Philostorgius considered proper boundaries.

The idea that the image may serve the faithful as a channel of communication with the Deity received a powerful impetus toward the end of the fifth century through the anagogical concepts introduced into Christian thought by Pseudo-Dionysius. These concepts formed part of that great Neoplatonic mystic's interpretation of the physical and intelligible worlds as superimposed hierarchies. "The essences and orders which are above us . . . are incorporeal and their hierarchy is of the intellect and transcends our world. Our human hierarchy, on the contrary, we see filled with the multiplicity of visible symbols, through which we are led up hierarchically and according to our capacity to the unified deification, to God and divine virtue. They, as is meet to them, comprehend as pure intellects. We, however, are led up, as far as possible, through visible images to contemplation of the

<sup>231</sup> *Oratio de deitate filii et spiritus sancti* (PG 46, col. 572 C).

<sup>232</sup> Clerc, *op. cit.*, 95 (Plato), 206 ff. (Dio Chrysostom), 255 (Olympiodorus); Geffcken, "Der Bilderstreit . . ." (above, n. 211), 306 (Porphyry).

<sup>233</sup> See above, p. 91.

<sup>234</sup> See above, p. 92 with n. 24.

<sup>235</sup> Bidez, *op. cit.* (above, n. 23), 78.



divine.”<sup>236</sup> To Pseudo-Dionysius the entire world of the senses in all its variety reflects the world of the spirit. Contemplation of the former serves as a means to elevate ourselves toward the latter. He does not elaborate his theory specifically in the realm of art, but its special applicability in that field was obvious and enhanced further by his frequent references to the objects which make up the world of the senses as *εἰκόνες*. Small wonder, then, that Areopagitic concepts and terms were promptly seized upon by clerics anxious to provide a theoretical foundation for the increasingly conspicuous role accorded to images in the life of the Church. It is as the earliest known document testifying to this step that the letter written by Bishop Hypatius of Ephesos to Julian of Atramyction has its peculiar and outstanding importance.<sup>237</sup> The Bishop brushes aside his suffragan’s legalistic distinctions between painting and sculpture and stresses the necessity of probing more deeply into the reasons for the Scriptural prohibitions. The defense of images which Hypatius works out is essentially a traditional one, namely, that images are useful for the religious education of simple and uneducated people. But the simple and uneducated now have become part of a hierarchic system, and the tools provided for them have a legitimate place, indeed, an important function in the divine order of things: “We leave material adornment in the churches . . . because we conceive that each order of the faithful is guided and led up to the Divine in its own way and that some are led even by these [i.e. the material decorations] toward the intelligible beauty and from the abundant light in the sanctuaries to the intelligible and immaterial light.”<sup>238</sup> This is unmistakably the thought and, indeed, the very language of Pseudo-Dionysius,<sup>239</sup> language which the Bishop applies to the concrete problem of the admissibility of images in churches.<sup>240</sup> Written within little more than a generation of the appearance of the *Areopagitica*, Hypatius’ letter shows how rapidly the concepts and terms of the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius were taken up by the defenders of Christian images.<sup>241</sup> The anagogical function of images is stressed also in

<sup>236</sup> *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, I, 2 (PG 3, col. 373 AB).

<sup>237</sup> See above, p. 94 with n. 33, p. 131 with n. 211.

<sup>238</sup> . . . κόσμον ὑλικὸν ἐὼμεν ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν . . . ὥς ἐκάστην τῶν πιστῶν τάξιν οἰκείως ἑαυτῇ χειραγωγείσθαι καὶ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀνάγεσθαι συγχοροῦντες, ὥς τινων καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων ἐπὶ τὴν νοητὴν εὐπρέπειαν χειραγωγούμενων καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ κατὰ τὰ ἱερὰ πολλοῦ φωτὸς ἐπὶ τὸ νοητὸν καὶ αὐλον φῶς (Diekamp, *op. cit.* — above, n. 33 — , p. 128).

<sup>239</sup> *De coelesti hierarchia*, I, 3 (PG 3, col. 121 CD).

<sup>240</sup> Hypatius, like his correspondent, is mainly concerned with justifying the *existence* of images in churches (see above, n. 33). He leaves open the question of the faithful’s proper demeanor. An approval of the *worship* of images can be read into his remarks only by the most stringent interpretation: Alexander, *op. cit.* (above, n. 33), pp. 181, n. 39; 182.

<sup>241</sup> On the dates of Hypatius see Diekamp, *op. cit.*, 109 ff.

an epigram on a picture of an archangel by Agathias (d. A.D. 582) and in a closely related epigram by Nilus Scholasticus. The markedly defensive tone of these verses is perhaps due to the fact that the representation of angels had long been a particular target of the opponents of Christian images.<sup>242</sup>

The apologetic statements encountered so far all have to do with the effects of images on the beholder and their usefulness to him. Many of these arguments occur again in the apologies of the post-Justinianic era. Especially the contention that images serve to convey our respects to the Deity, or to lead us up from the visible to the invisible, can be found again and again.<sup>243</sup> But in addition the apologists of the late sixth and seventh centuries began to use a number of arguments in which the beholder does not figure at all, and which are concerned solely with the establishment of a timeless and cosmic relationship between the image and its prototype. The role of the onlooker was reduced. Ways were sought to justify the icon as such, irrespective of personal and momentary experience, and to find its true meaning in its objective existence. It was lifted out of the pragmatic sphere of tools and utensils (however sacred) and was given a status of its own in the divine order of the universe.

This vital step was implicit in Areopagitic thought no less than the “anagogical” argument. It is, in fact, the reverse aspect of the latter. Just as, by virtue of the hierarchic order of the universe, there is an ascent from the lower and sensual to the higher and intellectual sphere and ultimately to God, so, in turn, God is reflected, according to the law of universal harmony and in gradual descent, in the lower orders and ultimately even in the material objects which make up our physical surroundings. It is in their capacity as reflections that such objects may be called *εἰκόνες*. Plotinus, the Areopagite’s spiritual ancestor, had already formulated a defense of the

<sup>242</sup> *Greek Anthology*, I, 33, 34; Loeb ed., I (1916) 20 ff. The date of Nilus is not known. The defensive tone is equally marked in another epigram by Agathias (I, 36). I am much indebted to Prof. Der Nersessian for drawing my attention to these texts. For opposition to representations of angels see some of the fragments ascribed to Epiphanius: Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.* (above, n. 28), pp. 69 f. nos. 8, 9, 13 or Holl, *op. cit.* (above, n. 27), p. 357 f., nos. 4, 7, 11. See also above, p. 131 with n. 209 (Philoxenos).

<sup>243</sup> John of Salonika, who concedes that this was an argument also used by the pagans (Mansi, XIII, col. 164 CD); Leontius of Neapolis, *Sermo contra Iudaeos* (PG 93, cols. 1600 C, 1604 C); treatise ascribed to Vrt’anes K’ert’ogh (Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 66, 69); cf. also a passage from a sermon ascribed to St. Symeon the Younger (A. Mai, *Patrum Nova Bibliotheca*, VIII, 3 [Rome, 1871] 35 f. = PG 86 bis, col. 3220 AB; 94, cols. 1409 C–1412 A; cf. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites*, p. LXXIV f.). This last writer introduces, aside from the relationship of the visible image to its invisible subject, the idea of an at least metaphorical presence of the deity in the icon; for this see below, p. 147.

images of the gods on this basis.<sup>244</sup> But no text of the period prior to the outbreak of Iconoclasm is known in which the concept is used in its specifically Areopagitic form for the defense of actual images. When Christian apologists of the late sixth and seventh centuries began to claim the relationship between image and prototype as a transcendental one the authority on which they drew was Scripture itself.

Man's own relationship to God is that of image and prototype. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Genesis 1:27). Consequently even the image of man is still a reflection of the Deity and may serve to represent It.<sup>245</sup> Since the man-made image is necessarily confined to man's physical appearance, the real problem involved in this argument is to what extent the human form may be claimed to partake of the godlikeness of man. The early Fathers who wrote on the subject of religious images rejected any such thought. They made use of the passage in Genesis only in order to show up the absurdity of the pagan cult image and its worship. The godlikeness of man was claimed as a purely spiritual relationship.<sup>246</sup> It would lead us much too far were we to trace the history of the interpretations given to Genesis 1:27 by different writers in various contexts between the third and the sixth centuries.<sup>247</sup> Suffice it to say that it is in a text of the late sixth century that we first find the godlikeness of man cited in defense of Christian religious images. Nothing points up more dramatically the change which the attitude of the Church towards art had undergone in the course of time than the fact that Genesis 1:27 came to be used in a sense exactly opposite to that found in the early Fathers. In his Sermon against the Jews Leontius of Neapolis defends Christian images with a number of

<sup>244</sup> *Enn.*, IV, iii, 11 (*Plotini Enneades*, ed. by R. Volkmann, II [Leipzig, 1884] 23). Cf. Clerc, *op. cit.*, 252; Geffcken, "Der Bilderstreit . . ." (above, n. 211), 304; Bevan, *Holy Images*, 75 ff.

<sup>245</sup> The argument was not contingent upon the biblical account of Creation. Some of the apologists of pagan cult images had already found a justification for the anthropomorphic representation of the gods in the claim that such representations symbolized man's own likeness to God; cf. Clerc, *op. cit.*, 206, 212 (Dio Chrysostom), 220 ff. (Chrysippos), 235 (Maximus of Tyre), 255 (Pagan of Macarius). According to Geffcken, *op. cit.*, 295 ff., this line of argument goes back to Poseidonios.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Cohortatio ad gentes*, 10 (PG 8, col. 212 C-213 A); also Minucius Felix in the passage quoted above, p. 89.

<sup>247</sup> See now Ladner, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VII, 10 ff. Attention may be drawn to the fact that even Epiphanius, certainly an outspoken opponent of religious images, was not wholly opposed to the idea that man's likeness to God, as proclaimed in Genesis, extends to his body; cf. *Ancoratus*, 55, 4 ff. (K. Holl, *Epiphanius, I = Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller*, XXV [Leipzig, 1915] 64 f.): "We do not say that either the body or the soul is not made in the image [*scil.* of God]." While this statement is rooted in his opposition to Origen, his stand in the matter of images was taken on entirely different grounds; see above, n. 30.

conventional arguments (including biblical precedent and the honors paid to images of rulers) and then proceeds: "The image of God is Man, who is made in the image of God, and particularly that man who has received the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Justly, therefore, I honor and worship the image of God's servants and glorify the house of the Holy Ghost."<sup>248</sup> "God's servants" are the saints. It is they who have received "the indwelling of the Holy Ghost" and therefore they are more especially "images of God."<sup>249</sup> In worshiping their image the faithful glorifies the "house of the Holy Ghost." Granted, then, that what the artist depicts is only a shell, a "house," this shell is hallowed and transfigured by the Holy Ghost, at least in the case of a saint. The house reflects its divine inhabitant. It is in this way that Leontius vindicates the dignity of the human form and its claim to reverence. In the descent from God to the saint and from the saint to his portrait the continuity is not entirely broken. What ensures this continuity is the "image" element which is present in both steps. At the basis of Leontius' use of Genesis 1:27 lies an essentially Neoplatonic belief in the divine manifesting itself in a descending sequence of reflections.<sup>250</sup> By implication at least, the work of the artist becomes an extension of the divine act of creation, a concept far removed from Early Christian indictments of the artist as a deceiver.<sup>251</sup>

Christian defenders of images had always had at their disposal another line of reasoning which had its point of departure in the New Testament: In Christ God had become Man and therefore capable of visual representa-

<sup>248</sup> εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονὼς ἄνθρωπος, καὶ μάλιστα ἐκ Πνεύματος ἁγίου ἐνοίκησιν δεξάμενος. Δικαίως οὖν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ δούλων τιμῶ καὶ προσκυνῶ, καὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος δοξάζω (PG 93, col. 1604 CD).

<sup>249</sup> This part of the argument is not brought out by Baynes, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), 102. It is quite clear from the context that in this passage Leontius is concerned particularly with the defense of the worship of images of saints.

<sup>250</sup> Gen. 1:27 is quoted in defense of man-made images also by Stephen of Bosra, again in a treatise addressed to the Jews. John of Damascus cites him in his Third Oration on Images (PG 94, col. 1376 CD) and a fuller version of his argument is preserved in a fragment in a Milan Codex published by J. M. Mercati in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, LXXVII (1895) 663 ff. (cf. especially 666). Stephen, however, does not elaborate on the relationship between image and prototype as Leontius does. Nothing appears to be known about this author; see A. L. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos* (Cambridge, 1935) 167. Cf. also Ladner, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VII, 14 f.

<sup>251</sup> For the artist as a deceiver cf. e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Cohortatio ad gentes*, 4 (PG 8, col. 136 A); Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 23 (Loeb ed., 286); also Bevan, *Holy Images*, 80 f., 86 ff. The revaluation of the artist's work as an extension of the divine act of creation was to play a part later in Theodore the Studite's defense of images against the Iconoclasts; cf. G. Ladner, "Der Bilderstreit und die Kunstlehren der byzantinischen und abendländischen Theologie," *Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte*, Series III, vol. I (1931) 10; *Id.*, *op. cit.* (above, n. 198), 144 with n. 103. Something of the Early Christian attitude perhaps survives in the cult of the acheiropoietai, which does not involve a revaluation of human handiwork; see below, n. 257, and, for a possible anticipation of this in pagan times, Bevan, *op. cit.*, 78 f.

tion. He had become incarnate, He had lived, acted, suffered on earth. The saints likewise had been actual human beings who had lived and died among us and therefore they could be depicted. This argument had appeared very early. Eusebius and – presumably – Epiphanius both reckoned with it.<sup>252</sup> It was particularly effective in drawing a line of demarcation between pagan idols (depicting in anthropomorphic form gods who had no claim to such representation), on the one hand, and Christian images, on the other, and was used for this purpose by John of Salonika<sup>253</sup> and Constantine Chartophylax.<sup>254</sup> The role these writers assign to the image is essentially a didactic one. The picture serves to demonstrate a historical fact. It teaches the doctrine of the Incarnation. We have seen that icons were, in fact, considered to be useful instruments in the defense of orthodox theology and that they were also attacked on these grounds.<sup>255</sup> In particular, we drew attention to the Eighty Second Canon of the Council of 692, a pronouncement which goes beyond an apology and actively promotes images as reminders of orthodox dogma. The Canon is important also because of its insistence on anthropomorphic representations and its rejection of symbolic ones. At the time when it was formulated Christian art had long passed from the symbolic to the direct representation of holy persons. In this respect the Canon is nothing more than a recognition of an accomplished fact. But the determination to eliminate even the last remnants of Early Christian symbolism is remarkable. Opposition to certain types of images on dogmatic grounds had been expressed much earlier, particularly by proponents of heretic doctrines.<sup>256</sup> But here the attack on one type of image is coupled with the promotion of another. The implication is that certain forms of pictorial presentation carry more meaning than others. Although in promoting the anthropomorphic image of Christ at the expense of the symbolic one the authors of the Canon were clearly prompted by a desire to instruct and impress the beholder, there is at least a silent recognition of an inherent virtue and power of visual form, a power contingent upon its being a direct reflection of (as distinct from an allusion to) its prototype.

At the time when this Canon was formulated apologetic thought had, in fact, already begun to place the connection between Christ and His image on a transcendental level. The image had begun to be thought of not simply as a reminder of the Incarnation, but as an organic part, an extension, or even a re-enactment thereof. Slowly concepts had begun to evolve whereby

<sup>252</sup> See above, n. 28.

<sup>253</sup> Mansi, XIII, col. 164 DE.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 188 A.

<sup>255</sup> See above, pp. 120 f., 131.

<sup>256</sup> See above, nn. 209 (Philoxenos), 210 (Severus).



the Byzantine religious image was to become a means of demonstrating the Incarnation not merely as past history but as a living and perpetual presence. The role of the image ceased to be purely didactic and was in the process of becoming sacramental like the Sacrifice of the Mass.

There is no text of the pre-Iconoclastic period which makes this sacramental and transcendental relationship between God Incarnate and His image entirely explicit. But we see the concept, as it were, germinating in a variety of ways.

It appears, perhaps first of all, in mythological form in the legends of the *acheiropoietai*. Undoubtedly one reason why the cult of these miraculous images began to enjoy official approval and encouragement was that they could be defended relatively easily against charges of idolatry. They were immune, at any rate, to the objection — liable to be raised by Jews, but also by conscientious Christians — that the Church was admitting the worship of man-made images. A defensive intention of this kind may, in fact, be implicit in the very term *ἄχειροποίητος*, which, as we have seen, was used in connection with the image of Camuliana as early as A.D. 569. The image was declared to be the very opposite of *χειροποίητος*, a term which, aside from its literal and general meaning of “man-made,” also had the specific connotation of idolatric.<sup>257</sup> But the *acheiropoieta* also dramatizes the idea of the image as Incarnation perpetuated. This is particularly true of those images which were thought to be mechanical impressions of the divine face or body. These images, which, as we have seen, soon won out over those of more mysterious origin, express in a most drastic form the belief in a direct and intimate relationship between the divine prototype and its pictorial representation. Not only does the *acheiropoieta* appear as a direct and lasting record of the Incarnate God, it owes its existence to a reproductive act which repeats, on a lower level, the miracle of the Incarnation. Hence the use made of these images in defense of orthodox christology.<sup>258</sup> If Dobschuetz’ dating of Pseudo-Gregory’s sermon on the image of Camuliana is correct, the inner

<sup>257</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 38. C. Cecchelli, in *Dedalo*, VII, 2 (1926–27) 295, quotes two interesting studies on this subject by A. Pincherle (*Gli Oracoli Sibillini Giudaici* [Rome, 1922] 120 ff.; *Id.*, in *Ricerche Religiose*, II [1926] 326 ff.). Cf. also *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles*, edited by F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, IV (London, 1933) 81 (a propos Acts 7, 48: “The meaning is . . . the Jews were verging on idolatry”). In a papyrus of the first century the word *χειροποίητος* appears to be used to denote the work of artists, without any derogatory overtones (F. G. Kenyon and H. I. Bell, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, III [London, 1907] 205 f. no. 854). *Ἀχειροποίητος*, therefore, perhaps may mean not only “not idolatric,” but also “not in the realm of art.” In this sense the term could be helpful to one intent on promoting the cult of an image while at the same time maintaining the Early Christian antagonism to the artist and all his works (see above, n. 251).

<sup>258</sup> See above, pp. 120 f.

connection between the miracle embodied in that image and the miracle of the Incarnation was made fully explicit as early as the seventh century. The author refers to Camuliana as “a new Bethlehem.” Christ appears in a new Epiphany to impress His features on a cloth ceremonially prepared by a devout follower. The whole story of the image is described and hailed consistently as a new Incarnation.<sup>259</sup>

The concept of the image as an extension or re-enactment of the Incarnation is also present — far less clearly, it is true, but in a manner more definitely capable of providing a defense even of ordinary non-miraculous pictures — in statements linking actual images with references to Christ Himself as an “image.” Such statements carry the implication that since God Incarnate is Himself in the nature of an image, His image in turn partakes of the nature of an Incarnation. It is an argument somewhat parallel to that which made of man-made images an extension of God’s creation of man in his own “image” and, like the latter, it was based on Scriptural authority. Had not St. Paul spoken of Christ as “the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4)? Pseudo-Gregory quotes these words in the very beginning of his sermon on the image of Camuliana. The author of the apology addressed to the Armenian iconoclasts introduces into his defense two quotations from the Fathers which refer (or, at least, were thought to refer) to Christ as an image. These passages, which evidently were selected because they extolled Christ, the “image,” as an object of worship, were taken — we do not know with how much good faith — to authorize the worship of derivative and man-made images as well.<sup>260</sup> Again it is the idea of the relationship between prototype and image as an all-pervading cosmic principle which provides a justification for the spreading cult of images.

Admittedly these texts lack explicitness. A passage in the Life of St. Symeon the Younger contains what is perhaps the most clear-cut statement in the literature of the pre-Iconoclastic period, envisaging a perpetual bond between the Incarnation and man-made images. The author relates that an image of St. Symeon, set up in gratitude by a woman whom the Saint had freed from obsession by a demon, worked miracles “because the Holy Ghost

<sup>259</sup> Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, 12\*\* ff.; for the date p. 27\*; see also L. Koch, “Zur Theologie der Christusikone,” *Benediktinische Monatsschrift* (1937 and 1938); especially 1938, 437 f. Another legend which dramatizes the concept of the icon as a “re-Incarnation” of Christ is that of the image at Beirut, which is made to re-enact not only Christ’s miracles but also His entire Passion. But this text cannot be claimed definitely as pre-Iconoclastic. See above, nn. 59, 62, 87.

<sup>260</sup> The Armenian apologist quotes Gregory the Illuminator, the apostle of Armenia, who, in a long prayer recorded by Agathangelos, his biographer, had contrasted in rhetorical fashion the wooden idols worshipped by the heathens with the cross of Golgotha bearing the dead body of Christ, which, for the purpose of this comparison, he had called an image (Der

which dwelt in him [i.e. the Saint] overshadowed it [i.e. the image].”<sup>261</sup> Like Leontius of Neapolis (whose perhaps slightly younger contemporary he was) the author envisages two steps: From God to the Saint, and from the Saint to his image. But more clearly than Leontius he describes both steps as emanations of the Holy Ghost taking place in a descending sequence. The first step is described as “indwelling” as it is by Leontius. The second is an “overshadowing” in evident allusion to the words spoken by the Archangel to the Virgin Mary: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee” (Luke 1:35). Thus it is a divine act analogous to the Incarnation of the Logos in the Virgin Mary which imparts to the image miraculous power.<sup>262</sup> And the image in this case is not an *acheiropoieta* but an ordinary artefact of recent manufacture depicting not Christ but a local saint. Here the image becomes indeed a sacred and perpetual vehicle of the Incarnation.

It will be noted that some of the texts quoted in the foregoing pages go further than others in the degree of concreteness or intimacy attributed to the relationship between image and prototype. As far as concreteness is concerned the ultimate degree was reached in those legends which ascribed the origin of an image to direct physical contact of the divine person with the material surface of the stone or canvas. More important, however, are

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Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 61; cf. *Acta Sanctorum Septembris*, VIII, 337 f.; in modern times the passage has given rise to the unwarranted thesis that in Armenia worship of crosses started as early as the third century: Cf. R. Garrucci, *Storia dell'arte cristiana*, I [Prato, 1881] 432 f. and M. Sulzberger, in *Byzantion*, II [1925] 387). The Armenian author also cites Severianus of Gabala, who – again rhetorically – had spoken of the cross as “the image of the immortal King (*ἀθανάτου βασιλέως εἰκών*)” and contrasted it with images of earthly rulers and their worship (Der Nersessian, *op. cit.*, 61; cf. above, n. 181). The same passages were to be used again by defenders of orthodoxy during Iconoclasm: Severianus is quoted by John of Damascus (*PG* 94, col. 1408 f.) and Gregory by Nicephoros (J. B. Pitra, *Spicilegium Solesmense*, I [Paris, 1852] 501). At that time they were, however, overshadowed by the famous passages from Basil (see above, n. 19) and Athanasius (*Oratio III contra Arianos*, 5; *PG* 26, col. 331 AB), which illustrated the relationship of the Son and the Father through the analogy of the worship paid to the ruler through his image. Though these passages were not intended to refer to actual images of Christ, any more than those of Gregory the Illuminator and Severianus of Gabala, they served the purposes of the apologists more adequately, because they not only referred, in connection with Christ, to images and worship, but applied the image concept specifically to the Father-Son relationship and thus linked the cult of man-made images more definitely with the doctrine of the Incarnation. Cf. Ladner, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VII, 8.

<sup>261</sup> ἐπισκιάζοντος αὐτῇ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτῷ πνεύματος ἁγίου. This is the text of the Jerusalem Ms. (S. Sabas 108), published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *op. cit.* (above, n. 97), 607. Holl, *op. cit.* (above, n. 73), 390, quotes from Cod. Monac. gr. 366, f. 155r, which says more explicitly: ἐπισκιάζοντος τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματος ἁγίου. For date and authorship of the Life see the reference quoted above, n. 40.

<sup>262</sup> For subsequent use of this concept by John of Damascus see H. Menges, *Die Bilderlehre des hl. Johannes von Damaskus* (Muenster, 1938) 79, 92 f.; Bevan, *op. cit.*, 144 f.

those statements which, instead of a single bodily contact, stipulate a continuing flow of divine energy from prototype to image. For with such statements we leave behind the concept of the image as a purely static and lifeless mirror reflection and enter the realm of thoughts and ideas attributing to images some form of animate life and power.

This was the most difficult and delicate, but also the most urgent problem with which the apologists of the post-Justinianic era were faced. We have seen to what an extent and with what elementary force magic beliefs and practices came to the fore during that period. To the common man, at any rate, Christ and the saints acted through their images. In effect the Christian image had become indistinguishable from the pagan idol. The defenders of the cult of images had to decide to what extent to acknowledge these animistic tendencies and how to incorporate them into their apologies.

The idea of supranatural power working in and through images is implicitly present in all stories about miracle-working icons. In so far as this type of story, so prominent in the literature of the period, was produced and circulated for apologetic purposes it points to a very wide acceptance of naively animistic ideas. But usually this acceptance is only implicit. The reader is not told how and why the icon acquired its power. There are, however, literary statements which show an awareness of the problem involved. Certain authors speak of the supranatural power of the image in explicit terms, thus following a path mapped out centuries before by some of the apologists of the pagan cult of images.<sup>263</sup> While some writers think in terms of divine substance, force or energy flowing from prototype to image, others go further and stipulate actual residence of the former in the latter.

We have already quoted the statements belonging to the first category, statements which remain within the framework of Scriptural "precedent" and define the force which flows from prototype to image as the Holy Ghost. Such statements evidently were intended to provide a theological motivation for the popular beliefs and practices of the time. They appear to have been prompted by a desire to sublimate the naive, animistic ideas of the masses, to elevate them to a plane where they became theologically acceptable by substituting for primitive magic the idea of the miraculous as a divine act pre-ordained in Scripture.<sup>264</sup> In this connection it is worth noting that

<sup>263</sup> Clerc, *op. cit.* (above, n. 227), 182 (Plutarch), 252 (Plotinus). Geffcken, "Der Bilderstreit . . ." (above, n. 211), 309 (Jamblichus), 312 (Julian), 313 (Olympius). Cf. also E. R. Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," *Journal of Roman Studies*, XXXVII (1947) 55 ff., especially 62 ff. (particularly for late classical texts concerning statues made animate by specific human action).

<sup>264</sup> The importance of this distinction between the "magic" and the "miraculous" was pointed out to me by Prof. Friend.

Leontius of Neapolis, who at least implies a descent of the Holy Ghost into the image, was, so far as we know, the first author who utilized in an apology of Christian images the claim that they work miracles.<sup>265</sup> In the Life of St. Symeon the Younger the causal connection between popular practice and theological formula is quite evident. The author introduces his allusion to the Incarnation in order to explain a miracle wrought by an image (and not vice versa, the miracle in order to defend the Incarnation).<sup>266</sup> It is true that a belief in the miraculous power of an image may have been promoted at times by the clergy itself for dogmatic purposes.<sup>267</sup> But when it came to a theoretical formulation and motivation of such beliefs theologians seem to have yielded ground rather than to have led the way.

The intensity of the iconophile movement was indeed such that it ultimately led to statements and formulas no longer compatible with the word of Scripture, though more frankly responsive to the animistic tendencies of the masses. A number of writers of the post-Justinianic era at least toyed with the idea of the image as an actual abode of the person portrayed. We hear of images being approached “as if” their subjects were present in them,<sup>268</sup> a concept familiar from the cult of the ruler portrait.<sup>269</sup> With obvious awareness of the rhetorical effect Photinus, the biographer of John the Faster, makes a last minute withdrawal from the abyss of sheer animism when he closes his story of a miracle-working icon of the Virgin with a reference to the image as *ὁ τόπος, ὁ τύπος δὲ μᾶλλον τῆς παρθένου μητρός*.<sup>270</sup> The writer was clearly aware that he was touching upon a sensitive and controversial point. The same is true of another author, who, however, by deliberate choice took an extreme position and produced what may well be some of the most radical statements on images in all Byzantine literature. In a previously mentioned miracle of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, in which a sick woman is cured by drinking a medicine prepared from plaster which she

<sup>265</sup> PG 93, col. 1601 CD. Cf. Baynes, *op. cit.*, 101.

<sup>266</sup> See above, pp. 144 f. with n. 261.

<sup>267</sup> See especially above, p. 120 (Edessa episode).

<sup>268</sup> Cf. the sermon ascribed to St. Symeon the Younger (above, n. 243): “When we see the Invisible through the visible picture we honor Him as if He were present (*ὁρῶντες τὸν ἀόρατον διὰ τῆς ὁρωμένης γραφῆς, ὡς παρόντα δοξάζομεν*).” Agathias, in a previously quoted epigram on an image of an archangel, says of the beholder that “imprinting the image in himself he fears him as if he were present (*ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν τύπον ἐγγράψας ὡς παρόντα τρέμει*)”; *The Greek Anthology*, I, 34, cf. above, n. 242. Anastasius Sinaita, in a passage quoted by John of Damascus in his Third Oration, says that the image of Christ produces an illusion of His actually gazing at us from heaven (PG 94, col. 1416 C). Arculf speaks of a man talking to an image of St. George *quasi ad presentem Georgium* (*Relatio de locis sanctis*, III, 4; Tobler, *op. cit.*, 197).

<sup>269</sup> See above, pp. 122 f.

<sup>270</sup> Mansi, XIII, col. 85 C; for the miracle see above, pp. 108 f.



has scratched from a fresco representation of the two saints, the act of drinking the plaster is blandly described as “the entering in of the saints.”<sup>271</sup> This amounts to complete identification of picture and prototype. The author states his position more explicitly in another story, also quoted previously, in which an image of the saints carried along on a journey is instrumental in the cure of the traveller’s wife. The tale stands out among a host of similar ones by the fact that the beneficiaries not only make no effort, by prayer or action, to secure divine assistance through the icon but are not even aware of the presence of the icon, at least when it first begins to operate on their behalf. The story dramatizes the objective power of the icon which is shown to be effective regardless of the faithful’s consciousness. Its key theme, however, is the actual presence of the saints in the image. The sick woman first sees the two holy physicians in a dream in which they assure her that they are with her. That these words refer to the icon is made clear by what they say to her in a second dream after the icon has been discovered: “Did we not tell you that we are here with you?” This is the main point of the story. In his concluding sentence the author stresses once more the actual presence of the saints, as distinct from a mere manifestation of their power.<sup>272</sup> It is possible, however, that he was pushed into this extreme position by the fury of eighth century Iconoclasm. There is no conclusive evidence that these Miracles were written before the outbreak of the Controversy.<sup>273</sup>

We have completed our survey of statements concerning the nature and function of religious images which have survived from pre-Iconoclastic times. They amount to little more than a collection of aphorisms. In elaborateness, profundity and lucidity they cannot compare with the great systematic apologies subsequently worked out under the impact of organized opposition. But some of the outlines of future theories already appear in

<sup>271</sup> ἡ τῶν ἁγίων ἐπιφοίτησις; Deubner, *op. cit.*, 138; cf. above, nn. 45, 89.

<sup>272</sup> Deubner, *op. cit.*, 132 ff.; cf. above, nn. 89, 98.

<sup>273</sup> See above n. 45 with references to the opinions of Deubner and Delehaye. Actual identity of the saint with his image is implied also in a story of the figure of St. Mercurius absenting itself momentarily from a picture, in which he was represented together with the Virgin, in order to carry out St. Basil’s request to slay Julian the Apostate. The emergence of this story can be fixed within fairly narrow chronological limits. Because of its evident dependence on a dream of St. Basil recorded by Malalas (*Chronographia*, XIII; Bonn ed., 333 f.) it must be later than the sixth century. But since it appears in John of Damascus’ First Oration on Images (*PG* 94, col. 1277 B), written in all probability about A.D. 726 or soon thereafter (Menges, *op. cit.*, 6), it is likely to have taken shape before the outbreak of Iconoclasm and not during Iconoclasm as suggested by Binon (S. Binon, *Essai sur le cycle de Saint Mercure* [Paris, 1937] p. 23, n. 5). In this text, however, which was ascribed to Basil’s pupil Helladius, the presence of the saint in his image is not stated as explicitly as in the above-mentioned Miracles of Sts. Cosmas and Damian.

them.<sup>274</sup> In intensity, at any rate, the image concepts of the late sixth and seventh centuries do not fall short of those evolved later by orthodox thinkers and at times perhaps go beyond them. This provides a measure of the importance which the icon acquired in theory as well as in practice during the generations that followed the reign of Justinian.

#### VI. CONCLUSIONS

Taken in its entirety the evidence reviewed in this study reveals a major revolution in the sphere of religious art. It was a revolution primarily in the extent and degree of the everyday use made of religious images by private persons, by the clergy and by secular authorities, not only in devotional practices but also for the attainment of concrete and specific purposes. At the root of this movement was a vastly increased desire to make the presence of the Deity and of the saints and the succour which they could be expected to give visually palpable. Actively fostered by secular and clerical authorities this desire inevitably led to a breakdown of the distinction between the image and its prototype. For practical purposes the two tended to merge more and more. In the wake of this development, which remained by no means unopposed and uncriticized even before the outbreak of official Iconoclasm under Leo III, Christian thinking on the subject of images also made important strides. Two developments in the realm of apologetic theory are particularly significant: An increasing preoccupation with the relationship of the image to its prototype (rather than to the beholder) and an increasingly strong belief in the potentialities of the image as a vehicle of divine power.

For the art historian these facts are of the greatest interest. It is hardly conceivable that the important new functions which images were called upon to perform; the intensity of the worship they received; above all, the magic qualities with which they were increasingly thought to be endowed, and the theoretical concepts which served to motivate these beliefs should have failed completely to find expression in the images actually produced at that time. One need only confront in one's imagination the apologist and the artist of the period in order to realize the profound effect which the development must have had upon the latter. For the first time the Christian artist is exempted by the apologist from the necessity of justifying his work by educating and teaching the beholder or by appealing directly to his emotions. The image need not narrate an event or convey a message, nor need the artist

<sup>274</sup> In particular they foreshadow some of the concepts subsequently elaborated by John of Damascus and Theodore the Studite. For these see the studies by Ladner, Koch and Menges referred to above in nn. 251, 259, 262.

make it a primary aim to arouse in the onlooker a particular state of mind, such as awe or reverence, piety or compassion. Instead the artist is charged with the task of creating an image timeless and detached, in contact with heaven rather than humanity, an image capable of mirroring, as if by direct reflection, its divine or sainted prototype and, indeed, of serving as a vehicle for divine forces, as a receptacle for divine substance. Self-sufficient vis-à-vis the beholder the image must at the same time be "open" towards heaven. What the artist is called upon to create is a shell, limp and meaningless in itself, ready to receive power and life from on high, from the Holy Ghost which will overshadow it, from the heavenly persons who will take up their abode in it.

Clearly these are concepts which were bound to affect the artist's work. It is not necessary, however, to assume that painters and sculptors were actually acquainted with the apologetic literature of their age. As we have seen, there is an intimate connection between the theoretical statements and the everyday practices of the period. In essence the former are but reflections and sublimations of beliefs drastically and spontaneously expressed in the latter. Artists may not have been familiar with the literary discussions concerning images. But they knew what uses their works would be called upon to serve, what functions they were expected to fulfil.

There should follow, then, as a sequel to this study an examination of the monuments of the period between Justinian and Iconoclasm in the light of the results which have been obtained. Here is an instance where the chances for a successful integration of art-historical studies with social and intellectual history are unusually bright, because the latter offers what is, by the standards of early medieval documentation in general, a relatively rich array of data peculiarly relevant to the former. Any achievement in the sphere of art that can be singled out as characteristic of this age has a good chance of standing in some inner connection with the new social and religious functions which images then acquired. But this is a step into uncharted land.<sup>275</sup> The present study will have fulfilled its purpose if it has succeeded in presenting with a fair amount of completeness the textual evidence for the intensified cult of images in the era after Justinian.

<sup>275</sup> In a paper to be published in a volume of studies dedicated to Prof. A. M. Friend, Jr., I have dealt with some aspects of the art of the seventh century which appear to me to be significant in the light of the conclusions reached in the foregoing pages.